A FAITH FUELED LIFE

I RUN ON FAITH AND I'M NEVER RUNNING LOW

FILLED WITH POEMS, PRAYERS AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES IN EACH CHAPTER

MARK ALEX

A FAITH FUELED LIFE

I RUN ON FAITH AND I'M NEVER RUNNING LOW

AUTHOR: MARK ALEX

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GET TRUTH GET LIFE MINISTRIES

Email: gettruthgetlife@gmail.com

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to everyone who needs to read it.

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IF YOU CANNOT READ THE WHOLE BOOK, READ THE INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION

Do you spend time thinking about God in your mind? Do you only remember God when you are going to church or when you are engaging in a religious activity? Do you think of your loved ones more than you think of God? Do you think of those who have hurt you more than you think of Jesus? How often do you think of the Most High? Did you know that when you spend time with God, your mind will be elevated as high as the heavens are from the earth, and there will be no limit to its elevated expansion?

Do you sin because you don't fully believe in the power of the unseen (God)? Do you truly believe that God is love or do you treat Him as a person who is beyond reach whose love you can't have? Do you believe that the Word of God has power over everything? If you believe so, you will consult the Bible before you do anything.

I do not for sure know how Christianity and Godliness has been in previous times. What I know is that we live in a time where faith is extremely rare even in church. We see evidence of little faith in how we live our lives. Scant faith can be heard by the words we speak. Speaking lowly of ourselves, of others and of God shows weak faith. Churches globally encourage more dependence upon the arms of flesh and little dependence on the mighty hand of God.

Prayer is often the last solution when every other possible solution has failed. We follow our own ways, and we resolve to pray when we are deeply entrenched in the mess that leaning on our own understanding has brought. However, God in His divine grace always saves us. We would save ourselves from much trouble if we had faith in God right from the beginning. Christians (including pastors, priests and Bishops) rarely study God's Word.

Many Christians, when you ask them if they read the Bible, they will tell you that they do not have time. The main reason for lacking time is being busy on the job, in school, on their phones, listening to their favorite music, watching their favorite movie or TV show. In short, they are busy doing everything else they can do except Bible study. They spend time with everyone else they can except God.

People are willing to pay huge sums of money to meet 'important people' like their favorite celebrities or role models. If an earthly president or monarch calls you for a meeting, you will

arrive at the venue on time or before time, but we do not do the same in church. Faithlessness and the need for faithfulness fueled the fire in me to write such a big book.

I have tried my best to cover as much as I know and was able to find out about faith. Unfortunately, as much as the knowledge inside this book may seem to some extensive and intensive, I have barely scratched the surface on the topic of faith. No created being can fully exhaust any Godly topic.

In her devotional book, Lift Him Up, Ellen G. White says, “There are those who find it hard to exercise faith and they place themselves on the doubting side. These lose much because of their unbelief.” Unbelief makes us lose so much. Jesus said almost the same thing (when addressing the doubting Thomas) in John 20:29 (KJ21) - “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

I understand that this book may seem long (to most people), and one might lose the patience to look at it, let alone read it. Enthusiastic readers set themselves goals of reading 52 books a year, 356 books a year, 1,000 books a year or whatever number of books a year. We have 85 chapters in this book. When you finish each chapter, count it as if you have finished a book. So, when you finish the entire 86 chapters, you will have finished 86 books.

I combined everything into one book instead of separate books. My goal was to give you the most value in a single, easy-to-use resource. It has everything you may need to know about faith all in one place. Secondly, I have other books and topics that I am going to write about. Printing, publishing and releasing ten, twenty or eighty-five books on the same faith topic might delay the other projects.

Your goal should not be to finish this book (or any other book). Your goal should be to get the most out of it. You can choose to study this introduction part alone and apply it to maximum capacity and your life will be blessed abundantly. You can read the 85 poems in each chapter alone, meditate on them and choose to read nothing else. You can also read the prayers at the end of each chapter without having to read the entire text. You can do the practical activities at the end of each chapter. Whatever works for you, I pray that you get the most out of it.

You don’t have to start from chapter one. You can start with the shortest chapters for example, “THE SEED IN YOU,” “WHEN GOD IS NOT ASHAMED,” “END OF THE ROAD,” “FAITH

ABOVE EMOTIONS," "FAITH IN GOD GIVES POWER," "CRUSHING THE WALLS OF JERICHO," "THE POWER OF COMPLETION," among others. You can also go to the table of contents and choose the title that is most appealing to you and read that chapter alone. Aim for transformation, not completion.

This book covers various aspects of life. For example, spirituality, business, career, education, family, social life, and character development. This is because faith is applicable in all areas of our lives. One act of faith in God will bless your entire life. One act of doubt can negatively affect your whole life. That is why God wants us to have faith.

When meeting politicians (especially in our African countries), they will most likely give you some money at the end of the meeting. This might happen when meeting other famous or rich individuals. However, it is important for us to know that the richest person in the world cannot give everyone money that will satisfy all their needs and wants in case everyone in the world asks them for money, but God can (2 Samuel 12:8). The wealthiest people in the world cannot satisfy needs that are beyond money, but God can.

God is able. God is beyond able. God is the most stable and God enables. Former United States of America President Barrack Obama had a famous saying that said, "Yes we can." I would like to twist it and say, "Yes He can." I'm not referring to President Obama, I'm referring to God. Even if God doesn't, He can. Even if He has not yet done so, He can. God's ability is beyond measure. God's ability is off the charts. God's ability is heaven-high and climbing.

It was around 2014 or 2015 on a Sabbath afternoon at a Bible study session at Nairobi Central Seventh Day Adventist Church. In that session we were learning about faith, and we were directed to Hebrews 11:1 (a definition of faith). That was the first time I consciously heard the words of that verse. That verse captivated me for some reason I do not know (because I did not understand it at that time). It caught my attention that I ended up writing it on my Facebook status update, barely knowing what it means. Now, chapters 1 and 2 of this book (namely, FAITH – THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR and FAITH – THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN) explains Hebrews 11:1.

A few years later, I read Hebrews 11:3 in the morning (explained in the chapter titled, "FAITH BEYOND SENSES: THROUGH FAITH WE UNDERSTAND). The first time I read it, it

captivated my mind, but I could not understand it like Hebrews 11:1. However, the thought of it and trying to demystify it disturbed my mind for quite some time that morning. I was not able to understand it until years later. I remember meeting my friend Moses Nguma that morning when we were entering the school bus, and I told him of the Hebrews 11:3 mystery that my mind was unable to crack.

Years passed and one day in 2020, I chose to read the entire chapter of Hebrews 11. The whole chapter captivated me and became my favorite chapter. Prior to that, my friend Steve had pointed out to me that there is a problem with my faith. Thus, I was curious to know what faith is and how to develop my faith.

Around 2019 or 2020, the same Moses told me to start posting spiritual things on social media. He said that after I had commented on one of his posts (probably on WhatsApp). At that time, I did not fully buy into his idea because it did not seem to me as something cool to do. I knew I would post about God but only occasionally.

In 2020 (during the COVID pandemic), I began taking time to study the Bible and I would study it for long hours in a day. I wouldn't just open the Bible and read. I would read and write. To my disbelief, the activity became brain candy loaded with hidden gems. It was a mind-bending journey packed with wow factors. The activity was not only interesting, but it was also fulfilling, giving me endless reserves and a limitless stash of peace and joy in my heart. It gave me more happiness than any other worldly 'fun' activity would.

I found myself wanting to post whatever I had studied from the Bible on social media without Moses having to remind me. Moses only told me that once and never said it again. Truly, God's Word does not return to Him void. Speak it and write it everywhere you go (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). I started my blog www.gettruthgetlife.com in 2022. I joined the children's ministry the same year. In the same year, I joined the church choir, youth ministry, teenagers' ministry, and the interest coordination (visitors) department. It was the same year that I began preaching.

In 2023, I attended a parent-teacher meeting at Nairobi South SDA church as I was one of the teachers of the children's ministry. In that meeting, I met with one parent called Lilian Mboya. Before and after that meeting, I would send my blog articles to various WhatsApp groups and individuals as well. Thus, many people in church were familiar with my blog articles. Lilian

suggested that I should write a book about faith. This is because she noticed (at that season), most of my blog articles were about faith. She might have said that jokingly, but I took it seriously.

As much as I was writing articles about faith, I had never thought of writing a book on that topic. My plan was to write a book on excellence as I have a published blog article on that topic. My blog article on excellence is quite long and it was the first long blog article I had ever written (about 10,000 words). I wanted to do more research and add additional content to it, but I was finding it slightly difficult to do that at that time.

When Lilian told me that, I thought about it. After I thought about it, I decided to make this my first book before I write books on other topics since Hebrews 11 was my most favorite chapter. When I started writing this book, it was so seamless as the content and what to research on flowed so easily.

The difficult part was that the inspiration on content from the Holy Ghost seemed to be a lot and sometimes never ending. So, sometimes it seemed like a lot of work. In 2023 when I had written about 70-75% of the chapters of this book, someone approached me on WhatsApp and suggested that I write and publish a book. He told me to combine my articles on faith and publish a book on faith. I did not tell him that I was writing it, but I took his word as confirmation from God that I am on the right track. Unfortunately, I have forgotten his name, and I lost his phone number since we did not talk for long. Many other good and noble people have given me suggestions on various topics to write about, and I will write them by God's grace.

What does faith have to do with this little story that I am giving you?

It was by faith that I attended Bible study sessions in church. It was by faith that I started doing personal Bible study. It was by faith that I began posting Godly writings on social media. It was by faith that I started writing a blog. It was by faith that I joined the various departments in church. It was by faith that I joined the children's ministry. It was by faith that I attended the parents-teachers' meeting and it was by faith that I agreed to Lilian's suggestion to write this book. All these steps of faith combined to give birth to this specific work.

Had I missed one small step such as attending the parents-teachers meeting, I doubt if I would have written this. The process that God takes us through may seem harsh at times, but it is always beautiful in the end (Deuteronomy 8:16). Faith in God blesses you. Faith in God blesses me. Faith

in God blesses you and me. Faith is one of the simplest but most foundational virtues to have. Faith only requires you to lean on Christ's everlasting arm. Say yes to His call and He will give you the power to do what He commands you to.

"If we take counsel with our doubts and fears, or try to solve everything that we cannot see clearly, before we have faith, perplexities will only increase and deepen. But if we come to God, feeling helpless and dependent, as we really are, and in humble, trusting faith make known our wants to Him whose knowledge is infinite, who sees everything in creation, and who governs everything by His will and Word, He can and will attend to our cry, and will let light shine into our hearts." - Steps to Christ, Page 96.3, Ellen G. White.

James 2:26 (KJ21) - "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

MY PRAYER: MAY GOD DRIVE YOU TO ACTION

GOD BLESS YOU AS YOU READ THIS BOOK!

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CHAPTER 1

FAITH – THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR

Faith is the substance means your faith must be tangible,

Faith is dead without actions, faith must be practical,

Faith works greatly when action is inevitable,

Faith moves mountains, Faith overcomes obstacles.

Your faith moves when you move,

Faith makes clues where there is no clue,

Your faith can make news, if only you knew,

Faith proves that God's Word is living proof.

Faith makes you see things that are not yet seen,

Faith makes you be what you've not yet been,

Faith makes clean what is not yet clean,

Faith makes kings, people not born by queens.

Faith is like planting a seed believing it will bear fruit,

Faith is shown in every deed, aligning your life with truth,

Faith is like a tree that overcomes the largest weed, you need maximum input,

Faith will be firm indeed, if you let it grow its root.

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Introduction

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

“Faith is not certainty of knowledge, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” - The Signs of the Times, March 2, 1876, Ellen G. White.

“Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency.” - Gospel Workers, Page 259, Ellen G. White.

Oxford Dictionary Definition of Substance – the real physical matter of which a person or thing consists of and which has a tangible, solid presence.

Oxford Dictionary Definition of Hope – a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.

Having these two definitions, we can conclude that faith is the real tangible physical matter of the things you expect or desire to acquire or happen. Myron Golden defines it as a belief that expects positive things to happen. He defines doubt as the belief of expecting negative things to happen.

Probably everyone reading this has had bad encounters in life. These bad encounters work to strengthen the level of doubt in our minds. When doubt is strengthened, faith is weakened. Therefore, when embarking on a certain course of action, we do it with much doubt and little or no faith. Most of us expect the worst and rarely expect the best.

In schools, students do assignments mediocrely to get good grades. They seldom go out of their way to go beyond the requirements of that assignment. In workplaces, people only do what they have been told and never go the extra mile.

We do the bare minimum because we negatively believe that nothing good will be added to us if we go the extra mile. For example, as students, we know there is no better grade than an A.

Therefore, we confine ourselves within the limits of the grading system. We don't realize that there are better things we could get beyond the A grade. As workers in corporate institutions and government, we confine ourselves to the limits of the salary scale. Therefore, we convince ourselves that the salary will remain the same no matter what we do.

Sometimes we entertain negative beliefs implanted in our minds through friends and the media that people are unappreciative, and no matter what you do, they will never appreciate. Thus, we resolve to do the bare minimum. This thinking has affected relationships and the quality of work in all we do. People don't love their wives and are not submissive to their husbands as they should because of such doubtful beliefs.

Many people in their businesses care less about their employees and their customers because they believe that no matter what they do, they will not appreciate it. Employees do not work excellently because they view their bosses as mean people who just want to use them.

Unfortunately, we take these beliefs in church or when appointed to conduct a Godly task. Many church workers/volunteers only do what they are told to and never go out of their way to do more. Therefore, the gospel does not spread as wide as it should.

Little faith is exercised even in doing the things of God. Therefore, God does not bless the church as He ought because without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). God, who inspired the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might (Ecclesiastes 9:10)," is constantly grieved when He looks at us missing the blessings that we would have gained had we moved by faith. We may be right; some people are unappreciative, but not all.

Some people may reward you with magnanimous rewards as a recompense for doing something very little to them. We may be right; some people are unappreciative, but not God. Someone may want to reward you for something good you did for them, but they do not have adequate resources. God can never run out of resources because He can create.

God can repay you with such a huge blessing for doing a very small righteous act. He may increase your lifespan by numerous years just because you told someone, "God loves you."

Malachi 3:10 (KJV) – “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

The phrase “the windows of heaven” in Malachi 3:10 appears first in Genesis 7, during the time of the flood. Genesis 7:11 says that the windows of heaven were opened. After the windows of heaven were opened, what happened? Genesis 7:19-20 (KJV) – “[19] And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. [20] Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.”

When the windows of heaven were opened, the waters prevailed exceedingly and covered all the high hills and the mountains. When you return a tithe to God, God will open the windows of heaven for you. The blessings that will pour on you will cover every hill and mountain in your life. God promises all these blessings if you meet one condition. What is that one condition? That one condition is returning a tithe. How much is a tithe? A tithe is only ten percent.

Is ten percent a major part of your income or a minor part of your income? It is a minor part of a person’s income. If God was a mean God, He would have asked for a major part of your income. Since God is a generous God, He asks for a minor portion and promises that if you do that, He will shower you with blessings you will not be able to contain.

God always rewards. Therefore, faith is believing that God will do as He says. Everything God tells you to do has a blessing underneath. In other words, each of the Ten Commandments carries certain promises and blessings for your life. We need to have a firm grip of faith and seek to obey all these commandments, always trusting that God is faithful even when we encounter persecution.

Rarely will God tell us the specific blessing He intends to give us when we obey His commandments because He wants us to act by faith. If He told us of the specific things He will do to us once we do a particular action, many people would live righteous lives. The righteousness they will possess won’t be genuine because they know what they will gain. True righteousness and integrity are evaluated and proved when we don’t know the blessings God intends to bestow us.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Myron Golden says, "A hope is not a wish, it is a well-rounded, well-grounded expectation." Our actions must portray that we have obtained God’s promises even before we physically possess them. That is true faith.

Myron Golden said that if an author knew that the book they intend to write would sell one million copies during the first week of its release, they would finish writing it in one day. When working on a business idea, we need to work on it with seriousness, waking up early and showing a relentless work ethic because we believe that God will make the business succeed.

When writing a book, we need to write it wholeheartedly because we know that God will make the book impact people greatly beyond our imagination. When working at our various organizations, we need to work excellently, knowing that our reward is not with man but with God. Whatever we do, when we do it excellently and to the glory of God, God Himself will be responsible for the results.

“To every man is given “his work” (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God.” – Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

“Thus our business or calling is a part of God's great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, He Himself is responsible for the results. “Laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9), our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God. The Word that fed Israel in the desert, and sustained Elijah through the time of famine, has the same power today. “Be not therefore anxious (R.V.), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? ... Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:31-33.” – Education, Page 138.2, Ellen G. White.

God is responsible for the results so long as you conduct whatever you do according to His will. Acting according to God’s will is acting according to God’s Word because God’s will never conflict with His Word. Psalm 100:5 (KJV) – “For the Lord is good.” The Bible says God is good, meaning whatever comes from Him is good. Therefore, the results He will bring you are good. They will be positive and not negative.

Our assurance of success is in obeying God’s Word. Thus, we can believe that whatever we do will be blessed if we faithfully obey His commandments. God, the Creator of all things, is the only

one who understands best how all things function. No scientist understands his branch of science better than God does.

Medical researchers have been unable to find cures and vaccines for all illnesses, but God has the cure for all diseases. No technological tool, no matter how advanced it is, can create the whole universe in six days, but God did that. Therefore, it is folly when we trust men who profess to be learned and wise more than God. Trusting in men limits our success, but trust in God has limitless success.

Genesis 3:1-5 (KJV) – "[1] Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? [2] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: [3] But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. [4] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: [5] For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. [6] And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

Satan succeeded in planting the seed of doubt in Eve's mind. His words sounded believable and sensible but were deceptive. Eve believed Satan even though she had no reason to believe him. Eve was surrounded with full evidence of the power of God's Word, but she still chose the Devil's word over God's Word. The ground she was standing on was created by God, the serpent she was talking to was created by God, the trees that surrounded her were created by God, and God created the sky above her.

The Devil created nothing in her environment, but she still placed Satan's Word over God's. When we cherish doubt in our hearts, we are bound to sin. Committing one sin opens the door to another sin of greater magnitude than the previous sin.

Once a person has sunk deep into sin, the seeds of doubt grow in the heart, and negative consequences become part and parcel of the person's life. Thus, making the man or woman always expectant of negative outcomes in their lives. Therefore, such a person finds it difficult to have faith.

“The unbelief which is cherished in the soul has a bewitching power. The seeds of doubt that they have been sowing will produce their harvest but they must continue to dig up every root of unbelief. When these poisonous plants are pulled up, they cease to grow for want of nourishment in word and action. The soul must have the precious plants of faith and love put in the soil of the heart and enthroned there.” – Faith and Works, Page 17.2, Ellen G. White.

True faith lays hold of unseen promises as if they are seen. One should believe that whatever prayers they have prayed that are according to God’s will/Word have already been answered before they are physically manifested. Through their faith, they shall act accordingly because they believe that the power to succeed rests with God and not them.

Therefore, if a preacher is going on missions to save souls, they should adequately prepare for that mission because they trust that God's power will bring souls to salvation. If you are running a business that does not conflict with God’s Word and have prayed to God to make it successful, work on it earnestly, believing that it will be successful even before it is successful.

It is an act of faith for a student to put effort into his studies, believing that God will make his honest efforts successful. If you want to build a house, don’t wait to have money first so that you can build it. By faith, look for a piece of land where you want to build that house, go to architects and engineers, find out the cost of designing and labor to build that house, search for the needed materials, and start planning for it. By faith, you can buy one material after the other until you have everything in place. Most importantly, pray over it.

True faith is speaking of things that are not as if they are (Romans 4:17) because we believe in a God who does that and who gives life to the dead. As tempting as it may be, we should avoid talking about our struggles and doubts because such speech gives power to the enemy to afflict us more.

It is only God who we are to take our adversities to because He is the only One with the power to solve them. Telling our problems to friends and close people to us puts us at risk of receiving ungodly advice. Secondly, it may make us a laughingstock to some. Thirdly, some well-meaning friends may not have the solution to the problem because they have probably not experienced it.

We should avoid speaking out about our afflictions and weaknesses unless when presenting prayer requests to people we fellowship with. Hannah did not even tell Eli, the High Priest, her challenges. She prayed silently (1 Samuel 1).

“We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His Word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do.” — Messages to Young People, Page 309.4, Ellen G. White.

“Satan puts into the mind thoughts which the Christian should never utter. The scornful retort, the bitter, passionate utterance, the cruel, suspicious charge, are from him. How many words are spoken that do only harm to those who utter them and to those who hear! Hard words beat upon the heart, awaking to life its worst passions. Those who do evil with their tongues ... grieve the Holy Spirit; for they are working at cross purposes with God.” – In Heavenly Places, Page 174, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

What do we hope for?

Success in Our Education

The Purpose of Education

“Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” – Education, Page 13.1, Ellen G. White.

By faith, we should have the view of eternity even when conducting our earthly studies. We should have a higher aim when studying. Our highest aim should not be to study to get a job or make money but to study to be fit for the kingdom of heaven.

We ought to be the light of the world, even in our classrooms. Fellow students should see God through us. How we behave in class and how we interact with our fellow students and teachers should reflect God because we are created in His image.

Look for God in Your Studies

Jeremiah 29:13 (KJV) – “And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

We should look for God everywhere and in everything we do. We should use Biblical truth as the basis of what we are studying. If something does not align with Biblical truth, we should not accept it. For example, theories like evolution and the big bang theory conflict with Biblical truth.

Theories that the world has been around for billions of years conflict with Biblical truth. However, some scientific theories align with the Bible, for example, Newton’s third law of motion, which says, “For each and every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

The Bible promises that if we look for God diligently, we shall find Him. Once we find Him, we will get all that comes with Him, including success in education. We should form prayer and Bible study discussion groups in our schools to strengthen each other. Once we are spiritually strengthened, we shall be academically empowered.

The Bible for Intellectual Development

I was sitting in church with one of my nine-year old mentees and friend when Jake stood at the pulpit in church to present. My friend told me (jokingly) that he does not like Jake. I asked him why. He told me the reason is that Jake is too smart. He said, “Jake knows everything. He has the answers to all questions. Even before you ask him a question, he already knows the answer to that question that you are about to ask.” I told him, “If you want to be smart (intelligent) like that, take time to study the Bible. Jake is smart like that because he spends time reading the Bible.”

I had not interacted much with Jake at that time to know whether he reads the Bible or not. What I knew is that Jake is a ten-year-old preacher and the son to Pastor Machoka. Because I had seen him preaching a couple of times, I automatically assumed that he reads the Bible. One day his mother Sussy revealed to me that my assumptions were true. She told me, “Jake first learned reading through reading 'My First Bible in Pictures' by Kenneth Taylor. He had refused to read any other children's book that I purchased for him.”

Children should start interacting with the Bible at an early age before interacting with any other book. As the world presents its curriculum to our children (that doesn't add much value), Christian curriculum developers of all subjects should work hard in producing and distributing educational material that aligns with the Bible.

For example, a Christian author with the knowledge of math can use math examples from the Bible. Instead of learning fairy tales in kindergarten and elementary, let your children interact with Bible stories. If they do this, their foundation will be more grounded and the Word that brings life will bring life to their intellectual abilities.

Laban and Brenda, the father and mother of Emmanuel (who was around eight years old by then) revealed in a parents and teachers' meeting in church that they took the television from the sitting room in their home to curb the evil influence that media may have on children.

Emmanuel (who is around ten years now) preaches like Jake. I have seen him preaching in church ever since he was eight years old. He is extremely knowledgeable on the Bible and extraordinarily brilliant in school as well. The absence of television made him take time to study the Bible more. Like Jake, he always has answers to questions in his Sabbath school class. He portrays knowledge beyond his age.

"In searching out the various parts and studying their relationship, the highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense activity. No one can engage in such study without developing mental power." - Education, Page 124.1, Ellen G. White.

"And not alone in searching out truth and bringing it together does the mental value of Bible study consist. It consists also in the effort required to grasp the themes presented. The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled. If never tasked to comprehend grand and far-reaching truths, it after a time loses the power of growth. As a safeguard against this degeneracy, and a stimulus to development, nothing else can equal the study of God's word. As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind thus brought

in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite cannot but expand and strengthen." - Education, Page 124.2, Ellen G. White.

Bible study has a transformative impact on the intellect, suggesting that it not only informs but also enhances mental abilities. Beyond discovering biblical truths, the process of engaging with scripture requires a high level of intellectual effort, which strengthens the mind.

Focusing solely on everyday matters can "dwarf" and weaken the mind. Intellectual stagnation comes from a lack of engagement with profound concepts. By contrast, studying the Bible, with its profound themes and complex ideas, can prevent this mental stagnation, pushing readers toward greater intellectual resilience.

The Bible surpasses all other books as a source of intellectual training. The Bible has grand themes, simple yet dignified language, and vivid imagery that elevates and stimulates thoughts. The Bible presents readers with "stupendous truths," concepts so vast and intricate that engaging with them expands the mind, bringing it into “contact with the thoughts of the Infinite.” In this view, regular, rigorous Bible study doesn’t just impart knowledge; it fosters cognitive development and an expansive mental capacity.

“For the mind and the soul, as well as for the body, it is God's law that strength is acquired by effort. It is exercise that develops. In harmony with this law, God has provided the means for mental and spiritual development in His Word.”- Education, Page 123.1, Ellen G. White.

We will experience spiritual and mental development through the diligent study of God’s Word. Studying God’s Word will build our emotional ability to manage life’s tough situations. Studying and applying God’s Word gives one joy and peace. Thus, it gives us the mental capacity to concentrate more on our studies.

As the Word of God strengthens the mind, it also purifies it, enabling the student to understand complex concepts. We see this evidence in the Word of God as Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:8 that those who have a pure heart will see God. This verse means that we will literally see God face to face when we go to our awaited glorious home. It means that we will also see the workings of God in our lives. A pure mind will enable us to see things that are not easily seen (as God is not easily seen).

Critics have for long viewed people who are religious or spiritual as less intelligent because we have kept faith above what is humanly logical. Logic goes beyond what human beings know because it is God who created logic. The truths uncovered are more than the truths discovered because truth has an infinite nature as it is one with the infinite God (John 14:6).

The science student who treasures a diligent study and application of God's Word will come up with new inventions that will show the world that we are the light of the world. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

After I wrote these last five paragraphs in this section I decided to share it. This is because I could not hold the excitement I had from this revelation. When my churchmate Thaylis from Terezvaros Seventh Day Adventist Church read it, she commented on it. She said that Sir Isaac Newton (widely known for physics), wrote more on Bible studies than on physics. That fact astonished me. So, I decided to do research on him and other world renown scientists.

The world knows Newton best for his contributions to physics and mathematics, particularly in the fields of classical mechanics and calculus. What we rarely know about him is that he wrote many works on Biblical prophecy, chronology and the interpretation of Scripture. Newton loved studying the books of Daniel and Revelation, and his studies included detailed analysis of those two books. It is estimated that around one million of his writings were dedicated to religious subjects, which is significantly more than his scientific works.

His scientific methodology influenced his approach to scripture. He believed that understanding the natural world could lead to greater insights into divine truth. His belief was true. Jesus used nature to teach divine truth. Newton did not publish his religious writings during his lifetime as he was cautious about how people would receive his views. This was mainly because of the prevailing religious beliefs and the scientific revolution in his time.

You can check more about this from various sources, such as: "The Cambridge Companion to Newton" by Cambridge University Press (edited by I. Bernard Cohen and George E. Smith).

Newton had an extensive formal education. Many great inventors and innovators did not have much formal education. But that did not stop them from making significant contributions to their

fields. Thomas Edison had only a few months of formal schooling. He was largely self-taught. He was not very vocal about his faith, but Christianity influenced many of his spiritual views.

Michael Faraday is known for his great work in electromagnetism and electrochemistry (Faraday, 1839). He had little formal education. Michael was a strong Christian and believed that his scientific work was an extension of his faith (Russell, 2000). We know James Clerk Maxwell for his formulation of the theory of electromagnetism (Maxwell, 1865). He was a devout Christian. James believed in the harmony between science and religion (Campbell & Garnett, 1882).

Henry Ford had a limited formal education and dropped out of school at the age of 16. His hands-on experience in machinery and engineering led to the development of the assembly line and the mass production of automobiles (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). His Christian upbringing influenced his approach to life and work. Orville and Wilbur Wright, who are credited with inventing the first successful airplane, had only a high school education. Christian principles and a Christian upbringing influenced their work ethic and values (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Blaise Pascal was a mathematician, physicist and inventor and a devout Christian. He made significant contributions to both science and theology. Gregor Mendel was the founder of modern genetics; his work on pea plants established the laws of inheritance. He was a Christian and his faith influenced his scientific work, which he saw as a way to uncover God's design in nature (Davidson, 1995).

Joseph Priestley is famous for discovering (not creating) oxygen and several other gases. He made other significant contributions in the field of Chemistry. He was a Unitarian minister. He combined his scientific work with his religious beliefs and wrote extensively on theology and philosophy (Wikipedia).

We know Louis Pasteur for his pioneering work in microbiology, vaccination and pasteurization. He was a devout Christian. Louis often expressed his belief in God and saw his scientific endeavors as a way to save humanity and honor God (Geison, 1995). Max Planck is famous for introducing quantum theory to the world (Planck, 1949). He was a Christian. Thus, he held a strong belief in the harmony between science and faith (Heilbron, 1986).

Carl Friedrich Gauss was called the "Prince of Mathematics." He was known for his contributions to number theory, gaussian elimination, prime number theorem, modular arithmetic, statistics,

electromagnetism, geodesy, astronomy and complex numbers. His Christian beliefs influenced his perspective on mathematics and its application in understanding the universe (Dunnington, 2004).

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is the co-founder of calculus. He made other contributions to philosophy and many developments in logic and mathematics. He was a devout Christian. Leibniz believed in a rational universe created by God and sought to reconcile science with Christian philosophy (Antognaza, 2009).

Anders Celsius is famous for developing the Celsius temperature scale. His strong Christian beliefs influenced his scientific work (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). Charles Babbage is known for designing the first mechanical computer, known as the analytical engine. Charles was a devout Christian who believed in the compatibility of science and religion. He often reflected on the moral implications of his work (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Henry Moseley is known for Moseley's law in x-ray spectra, which led to the modern periodic table (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). His Christian beliefs influenced the moral responsibility of scientific discovery. William Thomson, whom some people referred to as Lord Kelvin, is famous for formulating the absolute temperature scale (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Johannes Kepler is famous for formulating the laws of planetary motion (Kepler, 1997). He was a devout Christian of the Lutheran denomination (Caspar, M). Robert Hooke is known for coming up with Hooke's law of elasticity. Hooke made significant contributions to microscopy and the development of cell theory. He was a devoted Christian who saw his scientific work as a means of understanding God's creation (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Leonard Euler made significant contributions to mathematics and physics, particularly in calculus, graph theory and mechanics. He was a staunch Christian who referenced his faith in his writings and believed that mathematics was a way to understand the mind of God (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

William Harvey is known for discovering the circulation of blood in the body. He discovered what God had already created like many other scientists and scholars do. Christian beliefs influenced him. William sought to understand the complexities of human life as part of God's creation (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Max von Laue is famous for the discovery of x-ray diffraction in crystals, which contributed to the field of solid-state physics. He was a devout Christian and saw science as a way to understand the divine order of creation (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). Nicolas Steno is known for founding the principles of stratigraphy and many other contributions to paleontology. He was a bishop who saw his scientific discoveries as a way to understand God's creation (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Samuel Morse is known for co-developing the Morse code. He is known for his contributions to the telegraph. He was a committed Christian who believed in the moral implications of his technological advancements (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). Joseph Black is known for discovering (not creating) carbon dioxide and latent heat. He made other contributions in the field of chemistry. He was a devout Christian who often integrated his faith with his scientific endeavors (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Michael Servetus is known for his discoveries in anatomy and physiology, particularly in the pulmonary circulation of blood. He was a unitarian theologian who sought to reconcile his medical findings with his religious beliefs (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). Rudolf Clausius is known for formulating the 2nd law of thermodynamics and concepts of entropy. His Christian upbringing influenced him. He often reflected on the implications of his scientific work (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

George Washington Carver was an agricultural scientist and inventor (Carver 1916). He was a devout Christian. He credited his faith as the source of his inspiration and knowledge. He developed hundreds of products from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and other crops. He discovered innovative uses for those crops, especially as alternative sources of food, household products and industrial materials. In his time, southern farmers relied heavily on nitrogen, which depleted soil nutrients particularly nitrogen (McMurry, 1981).

Carver encouraged crop rotation with legumes like peanuts and sweet potatoes. By popularizing these crops, he supported farmers' livelihoods by creating new markets and demand for these alternative crops. He developed over three hundred uses for peanuts and around one hundred uses for sweet potatoes. Through these crops, Carver created products such as dyes, plastics, gasoline, cosmetics and food items. He referred to his scientific discoveries as gifts from God meant to help humanity (McMurry, 1981).

Elijah McCoy was the son of formerly enslaved parents. He was an inventor and engineer who held over 50 patents, primarily in the field of lubrication for steam engines. His inventions helped revolutionize the railroad and manufacturing industries. He was a dedicated Christian, and his values influenced his commitment to practical, beneficial innovations (National Inventors Hall of Fame, n.d.).

Patricia Bath was the first African American woman to receive a medical patent. She was an ophthalmologist and inventor. She invented the Laserphaco Probe, a device that improved the treatment of cataracts. Her dedication to serving others and her faith drove her efforts to prevent blindness and advance global healthcare accessibility (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Lonnie Johnson was an engineer and an inventor with over one hundred patents. He is best known for inventing the Super Soaker water gun. He did some work in green technology, such as thermoelectric energy converters. He stated that his faith motivates him to use his talents for positive contributions (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Mary Jackson was one of "NASA's Hidden Figures." She was a mathematician and an aerospace engineer who played a critical role in the space program (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). She was a dedicated Christian who balanced her work and faith. She sought to uplift her community and inspire young people, especially women and African Americans, to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

Philip Emeagwali is a Nigerian-born computer scientist and engineer. People often regard him as one of the pioneers of the internet. Philip credits his faith and perseverance as central to his innovations in computer processing. His innovations helped advance networked computing and laid the foundational concepts for the internet (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

James E. West was an acoustician and inventor. He co-invented the electret microphone, a technology that is used in almost all modern microphones including those in phones and recording devices. His inventions have transformed the telecommunications and entertainment industries. He holds over 250 U.S. patents (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

James is a staunch Christian. He speaks on how his faith influenced his commitment to innovation and excellence. He sees his career as a platform to bring positive change and he often credits his

achievements to God. As I am writing this, James is currently 93 years old as he was born on February 10, 1931 (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

Lewis Howard Latimer was an engineer and draftsman (Latimer, 1890). He worked closely with Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison. Lewis contributed to the invention of the telephone. He also developed a more durable carbon filament, which improved the lifespan and practicality of the electric light bulb (Stross, 2007). He was known for his Christian faith and deep spirituality. Lewis attended church regularly and often expressed a sense of duty to use his skills in ways that honored God. His faith and commitment to social responsibility shaped his work and life.

Dr. Charles Drew is known as the "father of the blood bank." He was a doctor and medical researcher who developed techniques for blood storage, leading to the establishment of blood banks worldwide. His innovations saved countless lives during World War 2 and beyond (Drew, 1945).

Garrett Morgan is known for inventing the modern traffic signal and a smoke hood (or gas mask). His inventions were revolutionary in improving public safety as his gas mask was used by fire fighters during World War 1 (Sullivan, 1999). He often stated that his talents and opportunities came from God. His faith inspired his commitment to creating inventions that would protect and help people.

Madam C.J. Walker was the first self-made female millionaire in the United States of America. She developed a successful line of hair care products for black women. She revolutionized the beauty industry while using her influence to advocate for social causes (Tate, 2017).

There are other contemporary figures (from the 1950s to present) in the field of science who have made significant contributions and are/were devout Christians. Some examples are Dr. Ben Carson, Francis Collins, Alister McGrath, John Polkinghorne, Jennifer Wiseman, Niels Bohr, and Robert Boyle among many others.

All these examples clearly show that one can have lofty academic achievements and still be a Christian.

Diligence in Studies

“The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all. No one with a spirit to appreciate its teaching can read a single passage from the Bible without gaining from it some helpful thought. But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort. The truths that go to make up the great whole must be searched out and gathered up, “here a little, and there a little.” Isaiah 28:10.” - Education, Page 123.2, Ellen G. White.

When we are studying, we should take our studies seriously. Taking our education seriously portrays faith. This is not just limited to the education we get in schools but also applies to the education we get from church and home, not disregarding self-study. When studying a subject, we should not rely solely on one source of knowledge.

We should use the Biblical principle of here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:10). Most importantly, we should dedicate our education to God, for He is the Master Teacher. No book should be read without the individual first engaging in prayer. We should pray even for our instructors and for our fellow students as well.

We should not engage in secular study on Saturday/Sabbath or even do exams. When we keep the Sabbath day holy, as God has said, God will bless our academics. Wisdom comes from Him, knowledge comes from Him, reasoning abilities come from Him, and memory comes from Him. When we honor Him by setting aside one whole day to spend with Him, He will bless our studies by acknowledging Him as the Creator of all things, including education.

Secondly, we are to realize that we are fully dependent on God. The Sabbath day makes us realize our dependence on God as we rest from all our labors and worship Him, the Creator of the universe. We are to worship God and have a holy character every day. However, during the other days of the week, we do not get enough time to spend with God since we have filled our days with other activities.

On the Seventh day, after all activities have been set aside and our mind is clear, we should focus on God alone. When our minds focus on God, they get more enriched, arising all intellectual powers. Powers we need to succeed in education, among other things. Plan your study timetable on Sunday after the Sabbath and countercheck your weekly goals on Friday before the Sabbath.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. God has already given you the success you are hoping for in education. Therefore, live by faith and obey His commandments to access that success.

Success in Our Workplaces

Faithful Work from The Heart

Ephesians 6:5-8 (KJV) – "[5] Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; [6] Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; [7] With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: [8] Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The Bible tells us that servants are to obey their earthly masters with singleness of heart. They are to obey everything their master tells them if it does not go against God's law. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego obeyed the commands of the pagan kings but drew a line of distinction when they were commanded to go against God's law. They did not worship other gods even when their lives were threatened. They also refused to eat the king's meat (Daniel 1:8).

They worked excellently and were promoted. Some employees seek promotion more than they seek to produce results for the organization. Some do all illegal acts to get promoted, like bribing, false accusations, and murder. The spirit of selfishness controls such because they are only interested in how they will benefit and not how others will profit.

All in Effort: Faith-Based Excellence at Work

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (KJV) – "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Whatever you do, if it is in accordance with God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), do it wholeheartedly. One of the reasons why people fail to produce stellar results is that they do not possess full faith when embarking on their various assignments. Uncertainty about one's work's success makes many harbor feelings of doubt in their heart.

Working with one's might is an act of faith because you are doing your best to represent your Master in heaven and not yourself. Your highest objective is for God to receive honor and not yourself. This will please God, and He will be obligated to bless the work of your hands because His Word says that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). One way of diligently seeking God is being diligent in all works that glorify God while still here on earth.

Someone might do what you do better than you. That should not worry you. If you have done your best, God acknowledges it and blesses you. Myron Golden says, "Best does not mean better than somebody else, it means best to your capability." Ecclesiastes 9:11 (the verse following Ecclesiastes 9:10 which tells us to do our best) means that one does not have to have the best natural advantages to win the race.

Commenting on Ecclesiastes 9:10-11, Myron Golden says, “Put everything you got into everything you do because you will beat people who are more talented than you. You will win out over people who are richer than you. You will beat people who had more natural advantages than you just because you put everything you’ve got into everything you do, because they didn’t do their best.”

When talking about excellence, Myron Golden goes on and adds the following quotes:

“Doors open for people who do their best. Obstacles run from people who do their best.”

“The only way to be the best is to always keep becoming more.”

“Amateurs practice until they get it right, professionals practice until they can’t get it wrong.”

“Execute on your execution. Execute with excellence because existence is expiring.”

Choose Cheerful Service

Colossians 3:23-24 (KJV) – “[23] And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; [24] Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

God is not a robber. As the Bible says, you shall receive great rewards when you serve Him. Therefore, work joyfully as to the Lord and not unto men. Even though your work requires strenuous effort, do it happily without complaining and grumbling.

Complaints work a great deal in sowing and growing doubt seeds. Ungratefulness should be shunned completely because it prevents us from seeing God’s blessings and often shuts the door of opportunity. Replace it with gratefulness and begin to thank God for every little thing in your life. When you do that, God will be highly encouraged to do more in your life than He has already done.

We can take an example from our human relations. When someone fails to thank you for something good you have done, you lose morale to do something else for them. But when someone thanks you for something small you have done, you get encouraged to do bigger and better things for that person.

"Ungrateful people breed negativity. No one gets any pleasure from giving to an ungrateful person. When you show appreciation, the object of your attention blossoms and flourishes." – Paul McCabe. "A grateful person is rich in contentment. An ungrateful person suffers in the poverty of endless discontentment." – David A. Bednar.

God's ways and thoughts being higher than ours, makes Him do good to us even when we fail to show gratitude because He makes His rain fall on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). However, when you show gratitude, He will treat you not only as a treasure but as a peculiar treasure unto Himself. One way of showing gratitude is by genuinely thanking Him through prayers. Another way is by using everything He has given you to the best of your ability for His glory.

Leaders with Love

Ephesians 6:9 (KJV) – "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him."

The Bible commands masters to treat their servants with love and respect, just like Christ has treated us. God is patient with us; we sin repeatedly, but He still blesses us. He never gets tired of His attempts to pull us close to Him so that we can enjoy the infinite treasures He has in store.

We should treat our employees and subordinates with the same patience. If they make a mistake, we should have the heart to forgive and correct them with love while constantly encouraging them. Make it daily practice to pray for them, particularly in their weak areas. If we do that, we will see a great difference in our workplace.

Rest Well and Shine Bright

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of

the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Masters and servants alike should honor the Sabbath day and delight in it. If they do so, God promises that He will make them ride on the high places of the earth. No work should be conducted on Saturday. The Bible tells us in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) that all our male or female servants and all our animals should rest on Sabbath. Not only them but also the visitors that are under our care.

On the Grind with God

The Sabbath commandment gives rules on career success when it says in Exodus 20:9 (KJV) – "Six days shalt thou labor." From Sunday to Friday, labor is necessary and compulsory for a person who professes that they believe in God. Many spend hours on social media or gossiping in our workplaces instead of working. Therefore, we produce mediocre results and still wonder why we are not getting promoted.

Some may say that they finished the work they have been given. If you have finished the work, you have been given, you should ask your supervisor if there is more work to do. God will notice your diligence, and He will bless it. He may not give you a promotion in the same workplace. He may decide to promote you to a different and better organization than the one you are in. If you are in the best organization in the world, He may open doors for you to start your own business.

Plan, Reflect and Pray

God created light on the first day. Light provides illumination while you are working. That is why most people work during the day. Therefore, use the first day of the week (Sunday) to plan your week because planning will provide clarity (illumination) for the whole week.

Genesis 1:31 (KJV) - "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

God evaluated everything He had created on the sixth day of the week before He entered the Sabbath rest (Genesis 2:1-3). On the sixth day of the week (Friday), evaluate your week to see if you have met your goals as you prepare for the Sabbath. Write down everything you failed to do that you had planned to do and everything you did mediocrely. Then before you enter the Sabbath, ask God to forgive you for everything you did poorly and help you do better the following week.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Believe that you have already succeeded in your workplace. Therefore, work in accordance with God's Word.

Success in Our Business Ventures

Power Your Business with Faith

"One of the Hebrew words for a business professional is ohmein, which means man of faith and shares the same root with the liturgical amen. With no verifiable information that he will be successful in selling his wares, the merchant nonetheless purchases inventory. He then delights in selling out his entire inventory, even vital commodities like food or clothing, in exchange for little metal discs. Instead of despairing about how he will now feed and clothe his children, he has complete faith that whenever he wishes, there will be someone who will gladly sell him food or anything else he may need for those very metal discs. It is that faith that converts metal discs and printed paper into money. This faith gives currency value. Were he to trade on the basis of doubt and suspicion, he would contract no business at all. It is chiefly his faith that makes possible his profits." - Business Secrets from The Bible, Page 32, Rabbi Daniel Lapin.

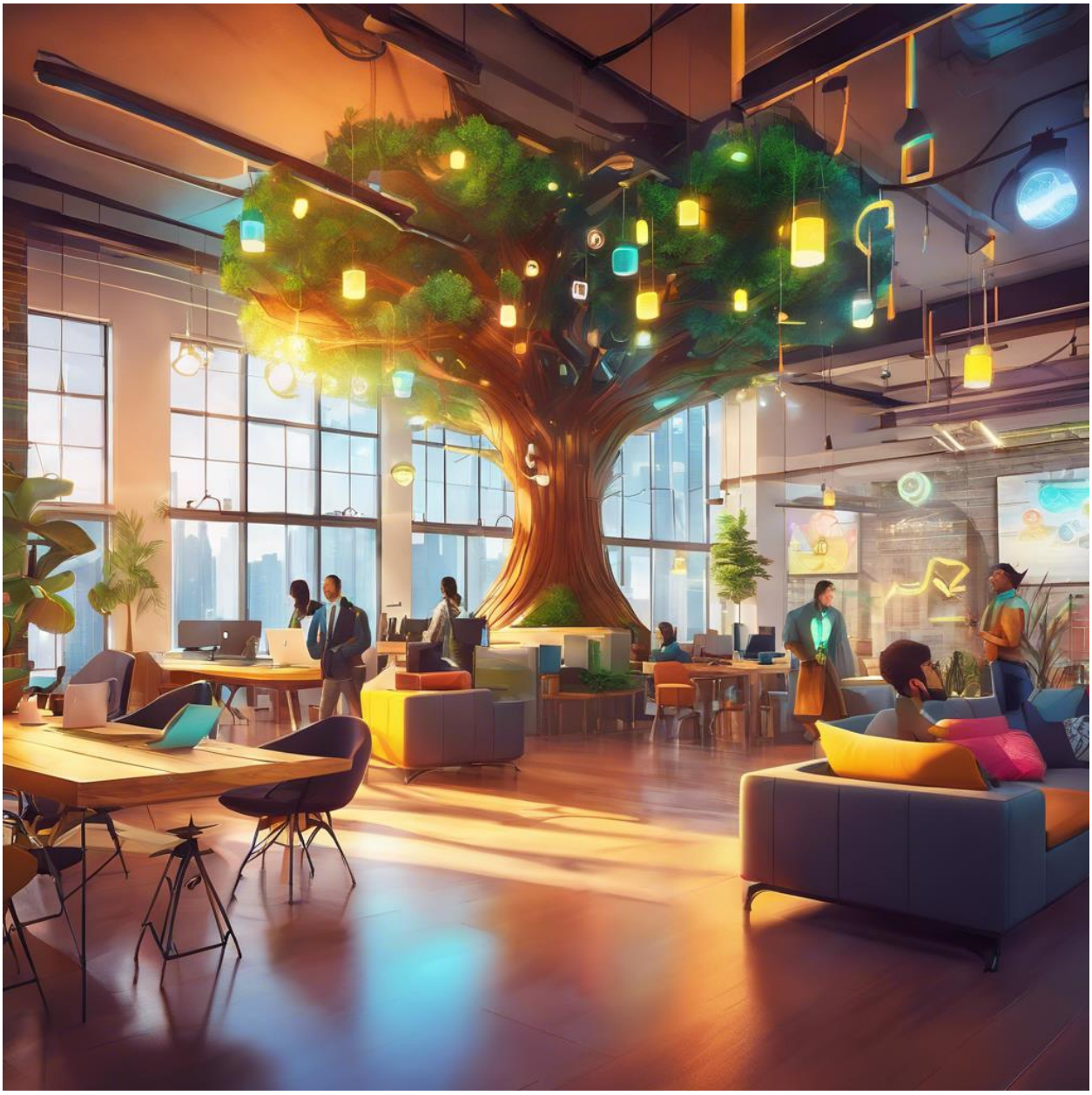
Navigating the Unknown: Business as an Act of Faith

Opening and operating a business requires stupendous faith. Most times, passing a school examination is not so difficult because examination questions come directly from what one has learned and are often repeated. Therefore, if you study the content in the book and past papers, you will likely pass.

Employment is not very difficult because you are told what to do and get paid for what you have been told to do. Operating your own business can be very difficult because you are unsure what to do to succeed. You may spend a lot of money on marketing and advertising, using all the proper methods, and no one buys your product.

You may sell high-quality products at affordable rates than your competitors, but people still buy from your competitors. Many college/university professors with doctorate degrees in business have experienced failure when they started their own businesses. This is because what they teach in class doesn’t always apply to the current real-life situation when running their businesses. Therefore, there is no certainty that the business you have opened will succeed or fail.

God's Blueprint for Success in the Marketplace



Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What things? Things that God has spoken. God has spoken hope. He has spoken about success and not failure. He has spoken prosperity and not catastrophe. Failures occur when we go contrary to His Word. The gospel is an assurance of blessings; if you obey it, it will assure success even in your business.

When you don’t hold on to the promises of God, you will have lots of uncertainty when running your business, leading to frustrations and even depression. However, when you firmly cling to

God's Word, you will not doubt your business succeeding because you are drinking from the fountain of endless blessings.

1 Samuel 17:26 (KJV) – "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

David believed he would defeat Goliath because Goliath defied the army of the living God. David knew that even though Goliath was a giant and an experienced champion, he could not win against him because Goliath despised God. Therefore, he asked the price he would get paid if he managed to win Goliath because he knew with God by his side, he would surely win him. When we put God first, last, and best in our business, we have an assurance of success.

Business as Part of God's Grand Plan

"To every man is given "his work" (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God."- Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

"Thus, our business or calling is a part of God's great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, He Himself is responsible for the results. "Laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9), our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God. The Word that fed Israel in the desert, and sustained Elijah through the time of famine, has the same power today. "Be not therefore anxious (R.V.), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? ... Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:31-33." - Education, Page 138.2, Ellen G. White.

Romans 12:2 (AMP) - "And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove

[for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]."

In her YouTube Channel, Business Coach Danielle comments on Romans 12:2 and says, “You cannot build a God-honoring business using the means and methods of this world.”

While climbing the hills and mountains of uncertainty in our businesses, we can have faith that they will succeed because God is responsible for the results. Therefore, our legal and moral responsibility is to operate our business in accordance with His will, for God cannot go against His will.

Therefore, when we sell in the marketplace, we should not doubt if people will buy from us. We should be assured that our products or services will be profitable because God never loses. In her song, "Never Lost a Battle," Cece Winans says this to God, "You can do all things but fail."

“There is no branch of legitimate business for which the Bible does not afford an essential preparation. Its principles of diligence, honesty, thrift, temperance, and purity are the secret of true success. These principles, as set forth in the book of Proverbs, constitute a treasury of practical wisdom. Where can the merchant, the artisan, the director of men in any department of business, find better maxims for himself or for his employees than are found in these words of the wise man.” – Education, Page 135.1, Ellen G. White.

Sabbath Rest in Business

Business should not be conducted on Sabbath. We should refrain from discussing business deals in church on Saturday. God created business, but when Christ came to the temple and found people conducting business (even though most were selling legal products), He chased them away.

Exodus 20:9-10 (KJV) – “[9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.”

We should operate our business for six days and rest on the seventh day. While we rest and commune with God, God may give us better ideas and strategies to result in greater profits in the

forthcoming weeks. He may even connect you with bigger clients. As your employees rest from work on the seventh day, God will refresh them with more energy to work during the week.

Faithful Leaders, Faithful Stewards

Plan your weekly appointments, schedule, and business targets on Sunday immediately after the Sabbath. Purchase inventory on Sunday (if it is a product business). On the sixth day, look at your plans and evaluate them. Carefully consider the things that made you succeed and the things that made you fail. Thank God for your success, and by the Grace of God, aim to shun the things that made you fail.

God has no problem with being employed, but it is God's highest will for His most beloved children to operate their businesses. Some people in the Bible were servants like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Although they were in employment, they held the highest positions in the king's palace due to their excellence.

You should have the highest position in an organization, whether in your home country or a foreign land. Your aim should not be to have the highest position. Instead, it should be to excellently serve God in whatever position He has given you, and God will automatically promote you. Excellence makes you max out the level that you are currently at.

Shining a Light on the Corporate World

Humility and the fear of God are essential in moving forward in life, including the workplace (Proverbs 22:4). Daniel and his friends were servants to the Babylonian king because Nebuchadnezzar enslaved their nation. If the Israelites had not rebelled against God, the people would not be in captivity, and they would have the freedom to operate their own business.

Exodus 20:8-10 (KJ21) - "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; [10] but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

When God gave the Sabbath commandment, He said, "Your manservant or your maidservant." He did not say, "your boss." In other words, God is addressing leaders in this commandment and in all the other nine commandments.

God wants us to lead even in the corporate world. The easiest way one can have the highest influence in a company is when one is at the top-most level in that company. The highest position is not being an employed CEO with a salary of five hundred million dollars a year. The highest position one can have in a company is the founder and the highest shareholder of that company.

Many decent Sabbath-keeping Christians are not able to keep the Sabbath because they are in employment. Therefore, being servants causes them to have less control over their lives. Many servants have been converted to religions (including Christianity) because their masters ascribe to that religion. For example, a family that goes to church on Saturday will have their house servants go to church on the same day.

Evil is high in the world because most Christians have allowed evil people to be their master and dominate the corporate world in almost every industry. Let us lean and cling to God's highest will for our careers and start our businesses.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. The profit you are hoping for from your products and services that conform with God’s law, you have already gotten it. Therefore, do your best and sell to as many people as possible.

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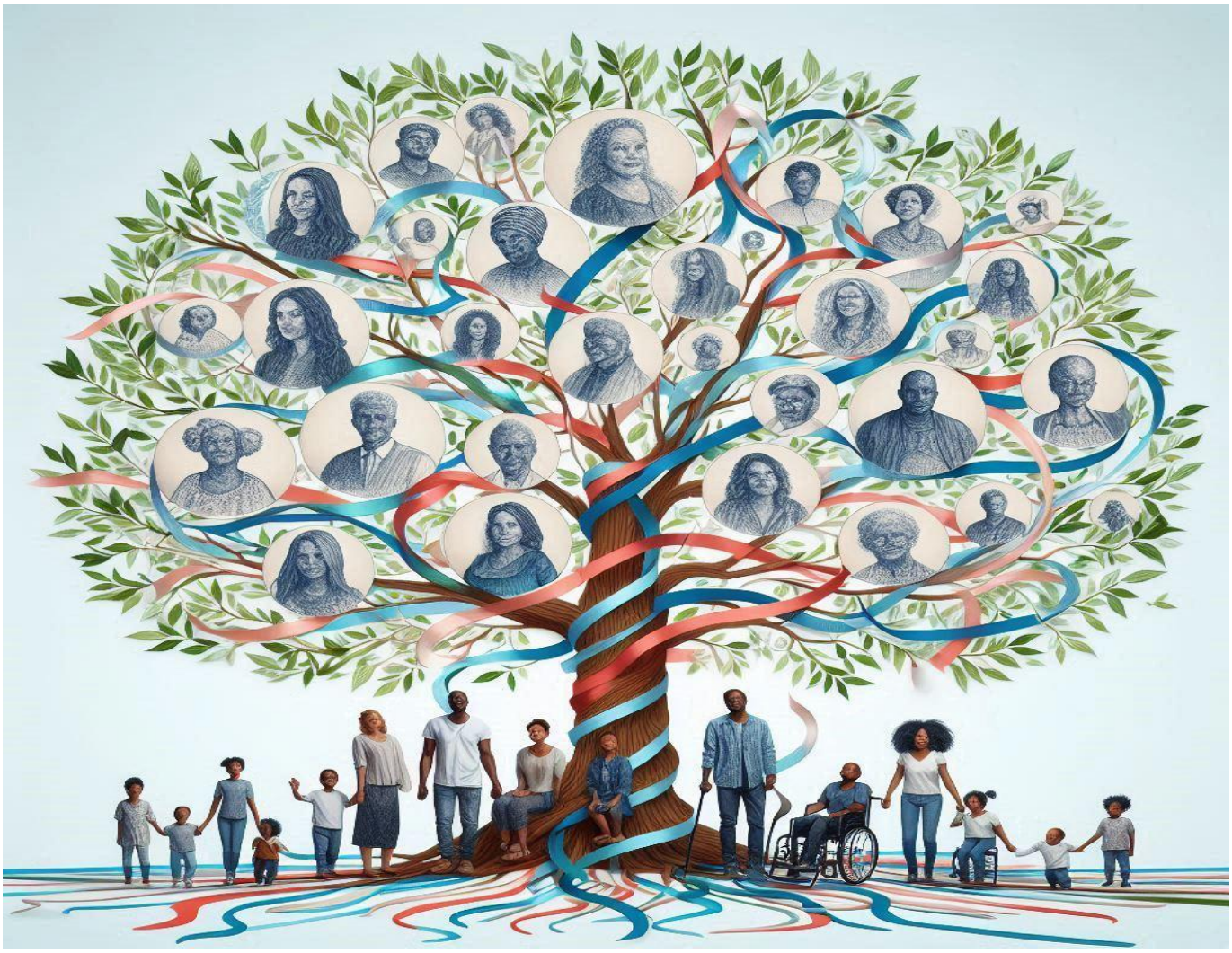
Success in Our Families



Relationship with God First

Genesis 2:21-24 (KJV) – "[21] And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; [22] And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. [23] And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [24] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

God had a relationship with Adam first before He formed Eve. He did not create Eve when Adam was watching. Instead, the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam before creating Eve. When

Eve was created, Adam was out of the picture because He wanted to form a relationship with Eve first before He introduced her to Adam. When Adam was created, Eve was absent because God wanted to form a relationship with him first before He gave Adam his wife Eve.

It is essential to have a relationship with God before considering marriage and starting a family. This is because God needs to be at the center of your relationship. Faith in God should be foundational and fundamental in your courtship and marriage. All your decisions should be based on faith, obeying God's Word in everything you do.

Paul Washer emphasizes that one needs to pray for one's spouse before they marry even if they have not yet met them. He also says that when one commits sexual sin before marriage, they are sinning against their future spouse. This is a powerful lesson on faith. As you are praying to find a spouse, pray for the protection, guidance and sanctification of that spouse. Secondly, honor her even before you meet her.

Marry the Opposite Gender

God created the family system and desires that we be successful in our family relations. A family is started by two individuals of different genders, male and female. Genesis 1:27 (KJV) – "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

Therefore, one rule for success in marriage and family is that the two individuals marrying each other should be of opposite genders. When humans break God's law by marrying people of the same gender, they kill the family system because two men or two women cannot procreate. If every adult in the world now decided to do same-sex marriage, the world's population would be extinct in forthcoming years.

One with Your Spouse

A man and his wife are meant to be one. There should be no one in between them. Some people have placed more value on their relatives than their spouses, while many place more value on their

children than their spouses. Countless times, you will hear people say they are in a marriage because of the kids and not their better half.

When the Bible says a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, it doesn't mean you should hate your parents or relatives. It means you should honor them but prioritize your spouse more than them. It may seem like a very difficult doctrine to apply, but that is how it should be. Why? Because the Bible says so.

Many who have prioritized their relatives more than their spouses have been disappointed by their relatives. This is because the spouse they once despised has either left them or, if they are still with them, they don't love them as much as they used to. Secondly, some of the relatives you prioritized have disappointed you and are thankless after all you sacrificed for them.

"God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided "an help meet for him"—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one."- The Adventist Home, Page 25.3, Ellen G. White.

Luke 1:57-64 (KJV) – "[57] Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. [58] And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. [59] And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. [60] And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. [61] And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. [62] And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. [63] And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. [64] And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God."

The order of priority in any family should be God first and then their spouses. Elisabeth and Zacharias prioritized God first. Their unity to honor God made them overcome the temptation to follow tradition (calling the child Zacharias after his father) and make the right decision to name their child John as God had told them. It is a tremendous blessing when husband and wife unite to honor God. In many Christian homes, this is not the case.

There is often a constant struggle between spouses whereby one wants to glorify God, and the other party opposes it. This contention weakens families and deprives them of acquiring God's blessings. After Zacharias and his wife stood firm withstanding the pressure from relatives and friends, God opened the mouth of Zacharias and made him speak.

Some have allowed friends to come in between them and their spouses, whereby they trust their friend's words more than they trust their better halves. They rely on advice from friends instead of relying on God for counsel. They fail to understand that their friends are struggling in life just like them since nobody is perfect and no human being knows everything. God is perfect, all-knowing, and more than willing to teach us how we should go (Psalm 25:8-9). He has given us the Bible to guide us in everything we do.

Counsel for Your Marriage from the Bible

"Get Counsel From the Bible—Instituted by God, marriage is a sacred ordinance and should never be entered upon in a spirit of selfishness. Those who contemplate this step should solemnly and prayerfully consider its importance and seek divine counsel that they may know whether they are pursuing a course in harmony with the will of God. The instruction given in God's Word on this point should be carefully considered. Heaven looks with pleasure upon a marriage formed with an earnest desire to conform to the directions given in the Scripture." – The Adventist Home, Page 70.1, Ellen G. White.

"If there is any subject that should be considered with calm reason and unimpassioned judgment, it is the subject of marriage. If ever the Bible is needed as a counselor, it is before taking a step that binds persons together for life. But the prevailing sentiment is that in this matter the feelings are to be the guide, and in too many cases lovesick sentimentalism takes the helm and guides to certain ruin. It is here that the youth show less intelligence than on any other subject; it is here that

they refuse to be reasoned with. The question of marriage seems to have a bewitching power over them. They do not submit themselves to God. Their senses are enchained, and they move forward in secretiveness, as if fearful that their plans would be interfered with by someone." – The Adventist Home, Page 70.2, Ellen G. White.

Counsel from the Bible is infinitely greater than counsel from all combined educated scholars, relatives, and friends. You should know God's Word before approaching people because sometimes error is so close to the truth and may get unnoticed if one is not correctly acquainted with God's Word.

Therapists, counselors, and pastors can come in handy in giving us advice, but their advice is only beneficial if it is in line with God's Word. When you follow the counsel of the ungodly in your marriage, you allow a third party to come between you and your spouse, thus soiling the sanctity of marriage.

"Sanctity of the Family Circle—There is a sacred circle around every family which should be preserved. No other one has any right in that sacred circle. The husband and wife should be all to each other. The wife should have no secrets to keep from her husband and let others know, and the husband should have no secrets to keep from his wife to relate to others. The heart of his wife should be the grave for the faults of the husband, and the heart of the husband the grave for his wife's faults. Never should either party indulge in a joke at the expense of the other's feelings. Never should either the husband or wife in sport or in any other manner complain of each other to others, for frequently indulging in this foolish and what may seem perfectly harmless joking will end in trial with each other and perhaps estrangement. I have been shown that there should be a sacred shield around every family." – The Adventist Home, Page 177.1, Ellen G. White.

Your Spouse Before Your Kids

Genesis 4:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. [2] And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

God created Adam and Eve first before He gave them children. He united them first before He blessed them with offspring. He would have made them together with their kids, but He did not do that. Instead, He created their kids after He created them. He took Adam's rib to form Eve but did not use the same method when creating their children.

Children are a result of two people of different genders coming together. The Bible says Adam knew his wife, and she conceived. No man can procreate without the help of a woman. Likewise, no woman can give birth without the help of a man. What does all this mean? This means you should prioritize your spouse before your kids because God united you two first before He brought the kids.

Therefore, do not embarrass your spouse in front of your children or gossip about them with your children. Do not encourage your children to rebel against your spouse, especially if your partner is commanding them to do something in accordance with God's law.

Many parents do this to win their children's affection and appear as the better person. This tactic may 'succeed' when the children are young since some may be unable to reason clearly and correctly. Once they grow old, they may rebel against you, and if their character is deficient or they fail to succeed in life, they will be highly likely blame you.

The best way to love your children is not through gifts and supporting their mischievous acts. It is by leading them to keep God's commandments, including the fifth commandment, which says, "Honor thy father and thy mother," meaning you must honor **both** parents.

When two parents unite in love and speak in one voice, they leave no gap for the child to misbehave. But once the child knows one parent supports their misbehavior while the other doesn't, they will have more strength and courage to bend the rules and go astray. We can witness this in various homes.

Be Equally Yoked

Children are more likely to be serious with God if both parents are serious with God. If one parent is sloppy about Godly things, children get the confidence to be careless in Godly things. That is why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:14 (KJV) – "Be ye not unequally yoked together with

unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

An unbeliever is any person you do not share the same beliefs. Both of you may believe in a higher being, but one is a member of a religion that believes in worshipping idols. Both of you may be Christians, but one believes in keeping the Seventh-day Sabbath while the other believes in keeping the first day as the Sabbath.

Both of you may be resting on the correct Seventh-day Sabbath, but one puts logic and science above faith and makes light of spiritual matters, therefore, making the two of you unequally yoked even though you are of the same denomination. It may seem like a non-issue when courting, but strife is likely to start in marriage since you will differ on various things. The children may grow up confused since they won't know the right path to follow. This confusion weakens faith and results in doubt.

Trust in God for the Great Responsibility Ahead

"Fathers and mothers need to understand their responsibility. The world is full of snares for the feet of the young. A life of selfish and sensual pleasure attracts multitudes. They cannot discern the hidden dangers or the fearful ending of the path that seems to them the way of happiness. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion, their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil." – Child Guidance, Page 21.2, Ellen G. White.

"More than human wisdom is needed by parents at every step, that they may understand how best to educate their children for a useful, happy life here, and for higher service and greater joy hereafter."- Child Guidance, Page 21.3, Ellen G. White.

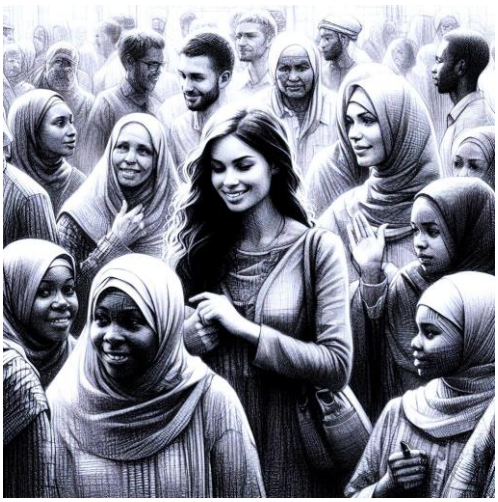
Always depend on God's wisdom to guide you in your family relations. In the book, Think Big, Dr. Ben Carson talks about the upbringing that his mother gave him and his brother. Ben said that when his mother was raising them, she was a single mother. Her spouse (Ben Carson's) father,

Robert Solomon Carson had left the family when Ben was eight years old. Ben's mother would seek God's divine wisdom when she encountered a tough situation in bringing up her kids. God was always faithful to give her the proper direction. We will be successful in our families when we seek God's guidance at every step, instead of leaning on our own understanding.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. God has already blessed our families. We should obey His guidance on raising successful families to claim that blessing.

Success in Our Social Relations

The Choice of Friends



Psalm 1:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. [2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV) – "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

The careful and intentional choice of friends will relieve us from more harm than if we had chosen our allies carelessly. Not only will it protect us from damage, but it will enable us to gain lots of benefits. As Christians, we need to choose our friends prayerfully and carefully. We should be highly intentional about how much time we spend with each friend.

Many have slipped from the right path and fallen into a deep pit because of spending too much time with people who cherish bad habits. Typically, when hanging out with bad company, many think they are just engaging in conversations, but they won't do the things they do. They deliberately hang out with evil allies because such friends usually have 'entertaining' stories.

Without realizing it, evil thoughts start getting into the subconscious mind. A time comes when the thinking and judgment of someone who was once good becomes corrupted. Once the mind

becomes corrupted, a person's words and actions get corrupted as well because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45).

Advice to Follow

The man who follows the advice of the Godly is blessed because he is following Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Association with sinners can be exceedingly injurious, especially for someone with little knowledge of God's Word.

Usually, the worst temptations don't appear sinful. Jesus was hungry after fasting for forty days when the Devil came to tempt Him to turn stones into bread. That temptation did not seem wicked, but obeying the Devil's word is disobeying God's Word. We need to know God's Word and ask Him for the gift of discernment to discern righteousness from evil to prevent ourselves from making wrong decisions and getting involved in evil habits.

We will succeed in our social relations when we delight in God's law and meditate upon it day and night. This is because God's commandments are a safeguard against deception and all the wiles of evil. We should be careful of the time we spend with people. Ellen White advises us that the only time we should spend with the ungodly is when we are evangelizing to them.

Present Truth to Others

Zechariah 8:16-17 (KJV) – "[16] These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: [17] And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord."

Our neighbor's benefit should be our greatest joy. We should do all in our power to ensure that we are a blessing to everyone we relate to. Therefore, we should think of the right thoughts concerning them and speak the right words to them, which are the words of truth. The truth will always uplift. It may hurt, but it will always liberate and elevate.

As Christians, we are called to evangelize to everyone we meet. We should have a habit of praying for everyone we interact with. You can form a prayer list with all their names and pray over that list daily. Secondly, the work of preaching the gospel is not only meant for pastors, as many of us think. Every Christian is called to evangelize.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells us to go and teach all nations meaning we should preach the gospel to everybody. With the current technological advancements, we shouldn't wait for an opportunity at the physical pulpit to spread the gospel.

We can write Christian articles and post them on blogs or social media. We can start Christian podcasts. We can record videos with our phones and post them on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. If you feel you lack the skill of preaching to people, you can always invite someone to church or share a YouTube sermon or blog article with them.

Resist and Avoid Corrupt Communication

Ephesians 4:29 (KJV) – "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Ephesians 5:3-4 (KJV) – "[3] But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; [4] Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."

Idle words and jesting have led to the degradation and destruction of many lives beyond our knowledge. Time spent on idle words would have been of great value if it were used to tell the truth. Words of truth are words of life because they flow from the fountain of life. Idle words carry death because the wage of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

We have minimal time in this world. Therefore, if we want success in our social relations, we should refrain from all sorts of idle words, including gossiping. Gossip, as common as it is, is a sin of no small magnitude in the sight of a Holy God. It is equal to murder because it may kill one emotionally or spiritually.

Some people have left churches because somebody gossiped about them, resulting in them losing their blessings. Some have sunk into depression and committed suicide because of gossip and

rumormongering. Others have ruined their destinies because of spending all their time engaging in idle words instead of valuable things. Many have lost valuable connections due to such behavior.

“A man's character may be quite accurately estimated by the nature of his conversation.... Those who jest and joke and indulge in cheap conversation place themselves upon a level where Satan can gain access to them.... When you associate together, you may be a help and a blessing one to another if you surround yourselves with an influence that is divine. But there are those who have grave defects, which are gaining a deeper hold upon them and which if not overcome will drive the Spirit of God out of the heart.... Jesting and joking may please a class of cheap minds, and yet the influence of this kind of conduct is destructive to spirituality. I speak to you as a class and also as individuals: Guard your words. Let sobriety and sound common sense characterize your conversation. Do not trifle with the purity and nobility of your souls by condescending to indulgence in stale jokes, and in cultivating habits of trifling conversation.” – Our High Calling, Page 292, Ellen G. White.

“O that every one of our youth would realize the evil of foolish conversation, and correct the habit of speaking idle words! Let everyone who has indulged in this sin repent of it, confess it before God, and put it far from him. In speaking foolish words, you have dishonored the name of Christ; for you have misrepresented Him in character. No word of guile was found in His lips, no word of prevarication or falsehood. The people that are described as making up the one hundred and forty-four thousand, have the Father's name written in their foreheads, and of them it is said: “In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:5.” - Our High Calling, Page 292, Ellen G. White.

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-46 (KJV) – “[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?”

John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world." God loves everybody, but God hates sin. However, God loves those who keep His commandments and those who don't. We are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). An image reflects the real thing. When you look at yourself in the mirror and move your hand, the image in the mirror will do the same thing. When you stand still, the mirror image will also stand still. The image cannot do anything contrary to what the owner of that image does.

Therefore, as people created in God's image, we must have the same character as God. We ought to love even those who don't love us. Not only should we love them, but we should also pray for them and do everything in our power to benefit them.

God hates sin but does everything in His power to bring sinners close to Him because He wants to save everybody (John 6:39, 2 Peter 3:9). We should genuinely love our enemies, constantly praying for them. It is difficult to love someone who has hurt you and is always saying bad things about you but when we allow Jesus to work in our hearts, it will be easy to do so. Moreso, we will delight in doing so.

Proverbs 16:7 (KJV) – "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

When your ways please God by always acting by faith, He will deal with your social relations. He will bring the right people to you. He will convert those you thought were the wrong people into the right people. He will also make those who hate you to be at peace with you.

Some people are hated because of the harm they have done to society. Maybe the person is an armed robber, con man, or drunkard, always causing havoc to his family and the community. If such people change their evil character to a Christ-like character, the majority of the people hating them will stop disliking them.

Some people are hated for no reason. Maybe they are despised because of Christianity and how open they are about it. God, in His power, may bring those who hate them to a position where they will have no option but to get assistance from those they hate.

The only person in Egypt who could assist Pharaoh (the Egyptian king) was a prisoner called Joseph (Genesis 41). Prisoners are considered to be enemies of society and the state. Not only was

Joseph a prisoner, but he was also a foreigner who had been bought as an enslaved person. Therefore, he was the lowest of the lowest.

When Joseph served God by using his gift to interpret Pharaoh's dream, God made Pharaoh to be at peace with Him. Not only was Pharaoh at peace with Joseph, but he highly favored Joseph by giving him the highest position in the land, which was the position of Prime Minister.

When you change your ways and walk on the straight and narrow path, God will do things in your life that you did not expect. That includes finding great favor in the eyes of people who once hated you. When Zacchaeus gave his life to Christ, he reduced the number of his foes because Zacchaeus returned fourfold to everyone whom he had conned and gave half of his goods to the poor.

God Wants You to Meet New People

Matthew 5:47 (KJV) – "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?"

If we only greet those who greet us, how different are we from unbelievers? Many people only associate with those who associate with them because they fear rejection or being snubbed. The fear of God in a person's life should be greater than the fear of rejection. It should be greater than the fear of being ignored.

Christ came to this world knowing that there were people who would reject Him and kill Him, but His love for them was greater than the fear of the harm they might do to Him. The Bible gives us a powerful networking principle by encouraging us to reach out to strangers. When you only associate with your friends, you limit your growth.

A businessman grows his chance of getting a client by reaching out to more people. A company increases the likelihood of people buying its products and services by advertising to a broader audience. A church increases its number of members by reaching out to more people. Therefore, the body of Christ should put great emphasis on evangelism and outreach. Make it a common habit to reach out to as many people as possible.

Pray for Others

Job 42:10 (KJV) – "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

God ended Job's captivity when he prayed for his friends. The more you pray for your friends, the more freedom and blessings you will get. We need to love our friends and genuinely care for their needs. Selfish people will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

God is always giving, and He expects His children to always give. One way of giving is praying for other people. Not only should you pray for your friends, but you should pray for your enemies as well. You should also pray for strangers. God cares for you and wants you to care for others too.

John 17:9 (KJV) – "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."

Jesus always prayed for His disciples. He successfully saved all His disciples except Judas Iscariot (John 17:12). If you hold a senior position in an organization, you should pray for your subordinates. If you own a company, you should pray for your employees, partners, investors, and customers.

You should pray for your employer and colleagues if you are an employee. If more people did this, more organizations would profit because they would be governed by love. Workplace conflicts and politics would significantly reduce as well.

Fellowship with Others

Matthew 18:19-20 (KJV) – "[19] Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We should have fellowship sessions with our friends if we want great success in our social relations. When God is foundational in any relationship, the bond is unbreakable. Fellowship should be consistent in families, friendship circles, and all other groups. If you have a singing group, you should always have time for fellowship. This practice will strengthen the group members

spiritually and gradually improve their character. The prayers offered by two or more people tend to be stronger than those provided by one person. Therefore, you will encounter overflowing blessings in your social circle.

Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV) – "[21] Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? [22] Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

We should be willing to forgive our erring brothers and sisters for our social relations to be successful. Everyone is a sinner. Therefore, if we have an unforgiving heart, we will hate everyone because, at some point, everyone in our life may cross our path.

When we forgive, we portray the love of Jesus, and as a result, our erring friends may get converted. Christ has forgiven us severally. We should forgive fellow men and women innumerable times as well. Forgiveness is for our benefit. When we forgive, we get peace in our hearts, causing us to be more productive in all areas of our lives.

God First in Your Social Relations

John 17:6 (KJV) – "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word."

Success in our social relations would be achieved by putting God first. Let the gospel be preached in words and actions; if we do that, more people will be pulled to Christ, and we shall all be united in Christ.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. We shall succeed in our social life if we allow the Word of God to govern our social lives.

Success in Our Health

“Most men know less about their own bodies than they do about their automobiles.” – Anonymous

Perfect Health in the Beginning

Genesis 1:31 (KJV) – “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”

“The creation was now complete. “The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Eden bloomed on earth. Adam and Eve had free access to the Tree of Life. No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the fair creation. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job 38:7.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 47.1, Ellen G. White.

"God created everything perfectly, including man. Before sin, Human beings were perfect in character, appearance, mental capacity, and health. “God made man upright; He gave him noble

traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 49.2, Ellen G. White.

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 45.2, Ellen G. White.

"As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty. The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 45.3, Ellen G. White.

The First Sin

Genesis 2:16-17 (KJV) – "[16] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: [17] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Man was created in ultimate perfection and was to maintain that perfect state by obeying the commandments of God. God commanded man to eat every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told man that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the tree they were told not to eat from. Thus, they shifted from an immortal state to a mortal state, from uncontaminated to contaminated and from

healthy to unhealthy. Sin creates loopholes in our physical and spiritual well-being. Disease was not known on earth till man sinned.

The Devil always seeks to destroy us but cannot do that if we do not cooperate with him through sin. He wanted to harm Job but could not because God had put a hedge of protection around him. God protected Job's family, finances, and health.

When God removed that hedge, the Devil made many successful attacks on Job. He attacked Job's family, material wealth, and health. When we live a righteous life, we abide under the almighty's shadow and are assured of ultimate protection from God.

Jesus Heals

Luke 19:10 (KJV) – "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Sin robbed us of many things, including perfect health. Jesus died on the cross to redeem what was lost. One precious thing that we lost through sin was perfect health. Jesus repurchased it, and whosoever believes in Him will get perfect health and eternal life, among other marvelous blessings.

When Jesus lived on this earth, He healed many people who had chronic illnesses. Some were disabled since birth, and others had diseases that tortured them for many years. Jesus is the master healer. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "The first health law is to confess your sins." One example of a person Christ healed is a man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years.

John 5:1-9 (KJV) - "[1] After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [2] Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. [3] In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. [4] For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. [5] And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. [6] When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that He had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? [7] The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming,

another steppeth down before me. [8] Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. [9] And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath."

Christ was passing by the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day. On that holy seventh day, He saw a man who had been sick and suffering for a long time. The man had an infirmity for thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years is enough time for someone to lose hope and feel their condition is incurable. However, that man had not lost hope. By faith, he stayed by the poolside, hoping that one day, he would get into Bethesda's poolside and receive healing. He held on tightly to his hope, patiently waiting for his turn.

All along, God in heaven was watching that man's faith. That man's condition may have been impossible to all earthly physicians. Therefore, he only hoped to seek divine healing by waiting for the angel, who usually came to trouble the waters in a particular season.

The Divine Healer has infinite methods of healing. He does not have to use the method you know or the technique you are used to. When He chooses to heal you, He will heal you. For many years, the man never got the opportunity to enter the healing waters, but God healed him when his healing time came. God might have waited for all those years (almost forty years) to show the world that there is no hopeless situation for Him.

The man was healed on the Sabbath day. Exodus 20:8 (KJV) says, "Remember the Sabbath day." To that man, the Sabbath day was a day to remember because it was on Sabbath that he got cured of a disease that seemed incurable for a long time. The Sabbath is a remarkable day filled with God's special and astonishing blessings.

Exodus 20:11 (KJV) – "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." When giving us the Sabbath commandment, the Bible says, God created heaven and earth in six days. Imagine creating this massive universe with its breathtaking beauty in six days. Isn't that spectacular? Keeping the Sabbath holy gives you freedom. Jesus performed more miracles on the Sabbath than on any other day.

The miracles Jesus performed on Sabbath were highly spectacular. On that special seventh day, Christ lifted heavy burdens off people's shoulders as He said in Matthew 11:28 (KJV) – "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Sabbath is a special day of rest. When we fail to keep it, we fail to get the rest God has given us for free. Therefore, God does not just want us to keep the Sabbath as a mere requirement. He wants us to keep it because He has blessings bestowed on us that can only be uncovered when we rest on the Sabbath day.

While the man waited thirty-eight years for the angel to come to the pool and trouble the waters, he was at the place of worship because he sought divine help. That help never came on all those six days of that week. It came on the Seventh day. Nothing in the Scripture is accidental. There is a reason why the Bible is specific when it mentions the Sabbath day as the day the magnificent miracle was done.

When we genuinely worship God on Sabbath, like that man at the pool, we display faith. It is at the place of worship that we understand that what we thought was impossible is possible with God. Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – "Through faith we understand."

The Sabbath allows us to worship God for an entire day without distractions. In Exodus 20:9 (KJV), the Bible says, "Six days shalt thou labor." God wants us to labor earnestly with utmost dedication during the week so that we can be entirely free on Sabbath and have the golden opportunity to focus on Him fully.

Our minds cannot be clear during the week because of the hustle and bustle of the week. We always think about how we will submit a given assignment on a particular day. Our minds cannot be clear when Sabbath comes if we have been sloppy throughout the week. Our minds will rest when we know we have done our best in those six days given to us to labor.

Resting our minds on the Sabbath day is a powerful remedy for mental health. Focusing on God unclogs all the stress and worries that have captivated our minds for those six days. That is why a person who keeps the Sabbath as God has commanded shall perform better than the one who works all seven days of the week. Ellen G. White talks about mind cure, saying that many diseases will be healed if the mind is in a proper mental state. Keeping the Sabbath day holy keeps the mind in the best mental state.

"The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression.

Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 241.1, Ellen G. White.

"God is just as willing to restore the sick to health now as when the Holy Spirit spoke these words through the psalmist. And Christ is the same compassionate physician now that He was during His earthly ministry. In Him there is healing balm for every disease, restoring power for every infirmity. His disciples in this time are to pray for the sick as verily as the disciples of old prayed. And recoveries will follow; for "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." We have the Holy Spirit's power, the calm assurance of faith that can claim God's promises. The Lord's promise, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18), is just as trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles. It presents the privilege of God's children, and our faith should lay hold of all that it embraces. Christ's servants are the channel of His working, and through them He desires to exercise His healing power. It is our work to present the sick and suffering to God in the arms of our faith. We should teach them to believe in the Great Healer." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 226.1, Ellen G. White.

Trust in God's Power

Every doctor should trust in the power of God to heal the patients presented to him. It would be highly beneficial if all doctors prayed earnestly for their patients. They could create a list with their patients' names and pray over it daily. This is because the ability to heal does not rest with them. The power to heal is with God. It is God who possesses all knowledge, including medical knowledge.

Fellowship with God will provide remedies for all diseases, including those that humans consider incurable. God is the Creator of all body parts. God created every microscopic organ in a person's body. When Moses told God that he had impaired speech, God asked him, "Who hath made man's mouth? (Exodus 4:11)"

"Physicians should seek to direct the minds of their patients to Christ, the Physician of soul and body. That which physician can only attempt to do, Christ accomplishes. The human agent strives to prolong life. Christ is life itself. He who passed through death to destroy him that had the power of death is the Source of all vitality. There is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. Christ endured

an agonizing death under the most humiliating circumstances that we might have life. He gave up His precious life that He might vanquish death. But He rose from the tomb, and the myriads of angels who came to behold Him take up the life He had laid down heard His words of triumphant joy as He stood above Joseph's rent sepulcher proclaiming, “I am the resurrection and the life.”” - Counsels on Health, Page 332.2, Ellen G. White.

Mind Cure

“Disease is sometimes produced, and is often greatly aggravated, by the imagination. Many are lifelong invalids who might be well if they only thought so. Many imagine that every slight exposure will cause illness, and the evil effect is produced because it is expected. Many die from disease the cause of which is wholly imaginary.” - The Ministry of Healing, Page 241.2, Ellen G. White.

Sometimes, illnesses are merely in the mind and not in reality. Other times some diseases are not as severe as they are, but our minds have caused us to imagine them as serious. This usually results from doubt and a lack of trust in God. When one’s mind always expects adverse outcomes, one can think they are sick when they are not. This belief may end up causing pain in various body organs since the mind is connected with all body parts. Therefore, other parts of the body are affected if the mind is affected.

We should guard our minds with diligence by being watchful of what we eat and how much food we eat. Diet affects the mind, which eventually affects spirituality. A healthy mind is highly capable of comprehending spiritual things. Many students would improve significantly in their studies if they watched their diet.

We should protect our minds by intentionally watching and listening to the right things. Our eyes and ears are windows to our minds. Therefore, if we do not shield them from evil, we will corrupt our minds, eventually harming our physical health.

“Adam and Eve fell through intemperate appetite. Christ came and withstood the fiercest temptation of Satan, and, in behalf of the race, overcame appetite, showing that man may overcome. As Adam fell through appetite, and lost blissful Eden, the children of Adam may, through Christ,

overcome appetite, and through temperance in all things regain Eden." – Counsels on Diet and Foods, Page 70.1, Ellen G. White.

"Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul. "A merry [rejoicing] heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22." The Ministry of Healing, Page 241.3, Ellen G. White.

Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, and love flow from God, and He will give us if we ask Him. In James 1:17 (KJV), the Bible says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." All good gifts meant to put your body in a perfect state of health come from God. Therefore, we should ask Him, who gives unto all men liberally.

Your Environment and Health

"The Creator chose for our first parents the surroundings best adapted for their health and happiness. He did not place them in a palace or surround them with the artificial adornments and luxuries that so many today are struggling to obtain. He placed them in close touch with nature and in close communion with the holy ones of heaven." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 261.1, Ellen G. White.

One's environment affects one's health. Living in the countryside while in contact with nature will boost an individual's health more than living in the city. The city is a concrete jungle with fewer trees and plant life. Therefore, we may fail to get the most out of what nature offers when we abide in the city. Sometimes taking a nature walk in an environment filled with trees will relieve headaches, among many other diseases. It will relieve stress and make the person more joyful.

Nature also has countless spiritual lessons. Jesus used nature several times to teach spiritual lessons. When we interact with nature and keep our minds focused on God, the value we will get is priceless, and the lessons we will learn are beyond what the best schools on earth can offer.

When Jesus healed the man who was born blind, He healed him using the soil of the ground (John 9:1-34). He could have spoken, and the man would have gotten healed. However, the Lord Jesus

took the soil, made clay, and used it to anoint the eyes of the blind man. He probably wanted to display the healing properties of nature. He healed the blind man on a Sabbath day.

Interacting with nature on the Sabbath as we focus on God is exceptionally beneficial. Such activity is precious because you are in contact with what God directly created. Therefore, you get first-hand benefits. When you abide in a brick-and-mortar environment, you get secondhand benefits. This is because God did not directly create the house or office you are in. It was made by man using God's raw materials.

Thus, Jesus said in Matthew 6:28-29 (KJV) – "[28] Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The lilies of the field were created directly by God, while Solomon's garment was man-made. In other words, what Jesus was saying was God's creation naturally surpasses man's creation.

Food is More than Appearance

Genesis 3:6 (KJV) – "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

The fruit appealed to Eve's eyes. It looked good even though God had commanded them not to eat it. Not everything that looks good is good for your health. Alcohol and wine are often placed in expensive, artistic bottles, but they add no value to your body. Instead, it deprives you of good health. It harms your kidney, liver, and other body organs.

Junk food looks good and is often delicious, but it is harmful to a person's health. We must ask the Holy Spirit to give us self-control to control our appetites. Adam and Eve lacked self-control over their appetite. As a result, the entire human race was degraded.

Self-Control on Appetite

Christ had to win the battle of appetite when The Devil tempted him to turn the stones into bread. One great way of gaining self-control over appetite and putting an end to unhealthy cravings is through fasting. Our hope for eternal life should be greater than our love for worldly feasts. By faith, we should cling to that hope and avoid anything harmful to the body because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Matthew 4:2-4 (KJV) – "[2] And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. [3] And when the tempter came to Him, He said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. [4] But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Esau sold his birthright for a plate of food. He forfeited future blessings for instant gratification. Jesus understood a lesson that Esau and many of us don't understand. He understood that spiritual food is of greater importance than physical food. If we want success in our physical health, we should have a daily habit of feasting on God's Word.

The Most Essential Food

A day should not pass without spending time on the Word of God. It does not have to be much time. It can even be ten to fifteen minutes. Spiritual food is more essential than physical food. Studying the Word of God and meditating upon it elevates the mind. It clears up all mental health issues, thus boosting our level of productivity. The Word of God refreshes the soul and invigorates the body with fresh energy. Hence, one can do better than usual.

The Beginning of Diet

"The diet appointed man, in the beginning, did not include animal food. Not till after the Flood, when every green thing on the earth had been destroyed, did man receive permission to eat flesh." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.1, Ellen G. White.

God permitted meat after the flood or, rather, after sin. Genesis 1:29 (KJV) – “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”

Before sin, God gave us a diet. The diet was vegetarian. The Lord God did not create animals to be eaten. God created them to be our friends. When talking about this, Pastor Randy Skeete often asks, "Why are you eating your friends?" Sin caused hostility between human beings and animals. It was after the flood that God allowed people to eat flesh because the flood had destroyed all plant life.

Clean and Unclean Meat

God allows us to eat flesh but from clean animals (Leviticus 11 lists all clean and unclean animals).

The following is a list of the unclean animals that God forbids us from eating:

Land animals

Leviticus 11:3-8 (AMP) - "[3] You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof [that is, a hoof split into two parts especially at its distal extremity] and chews the cud. [4] Nevertheless, you are not to eat these, among those which chew the cud or divide the hoof: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is [ceremonially] unclean to you. [5] And the shaphan, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is unclean to you. [6] And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is unclean to you. [7] And the swine, because it divides the hoof and makes a split hoof, but does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you. [8] You shall not eat their meat nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you."

Leviticus 11:3-8 and Deuteronomy 14:6-8 tell us the types of land animals that God allowed us to eat. The animals that God allowed us to eat are those that have split hooves and chew the cud. God forbade us from eating Camels, Rabbits and Pigs. Camels chew the cud but do not have split hooves. Rabbits chew the cud but do not have split hooves as well. Pigs have split hooves, but they do not chew the cud.

Meat (including clean meat) is not good for health. This is one reason why God gave us a plant-based diet before sin (Genesis 1:29). But He allowed man to eat meat with certain restrictions. Those restrictions were: Not to eat meat that has blood (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 3:17, Leviticus 17:10-14) and not to eat meat that has fat (Leviticus 3:17, Leviticus 7:22-23).

The Seventh Day Adventist denomination promotes a vegetarian diet (free from all flesh foods and animal products). Those who have chosen to eat meat are told not to eat meat that has blood and excess fat, aligning with biblical principles.

Observant Jews follow kashrut (Jewish dietary laws), which includes prohibitions against consuming blood and fat. Kosher meat must be slaughtered in a specific manner (shechita) that ensures the blood is drained. Fat from certain animals is also not eaten.

Muslims adhere to halal dietary laws, which prohibit the consumption of blood and require that animals be slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. While the primary focus is on ensuring the meat is halal, many Muslims avoid fatty cuts of meat.

Consuming blood can lead to the transmission of pathogens and parasites, which can cause illnesses. For instance, raw blood products can carry viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis, and various bacteria. High consumption of blood can lead to excessive iron intake, which may result in conditions like hemochromatosis, where iron accumulates in the body and damages organs.

Diets high in saturated fat, particularly from animal sources, are linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Excessive fat intake can lead to high cholesterol levels and arterial plaque buildup. High-fat diets contribute to obesity and related health issues, such as type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Reducing fat intake is a common recommendation for weight management. Some studies suggest that a high intake of saturated fats which can lead to cardiovascular diseases and certain types of cancer, particularly colorectal cancer (Harvard Health Publishing, n.d.).

Leviticus 11:7-8 talks against the eating of pork meat. Pigs have divided hooves but do not chew cud. What do pigs eat? They eat almost everything they come across. They are omnivores. The land animals that God allowed us to eat are herbivores not carnivores.

Herbivores eat a plant-based diet while carnivores eat an animal-based diet. Even though flesh foods are not the most ideal diet, God allowed us to eat flesh foods that feed on plants only (the ideal diet which He gave us from the beginning). Pigs are not herbivores. They are omnivores, they eat animals and plants as well.

It is common for pigs to eat food scraps or waste. If a pig encounters a deceased person while it is in a desperate situation, with no other food sources, it may eat that dead person as well. Pigs can eat human waste when placed close to it. They engage in a behavior known as coprophagy, whereby they eat their own waste. In relation to what they eat, the difference between pigs and flies is the size.

People who eat pigs eat them because they taste 'good.' Most of them lack an understanding of the harm that they are endangering their lives to when they engage in eating swine flesh. Some base their argument for eating everything because God created everything. God created everything and everything that God created has a purpose, but He did not create everything for human consumption.

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), after the prodigal son misused the wealth inherited from his father, he went to live a lowly life as a servant. While living as a servant, he consumed the worst meal that he could get. He was eating the pig's food. He ate it because he had no choice as He was not able to afford better food. That story uses pig food as an analogy to depict the lowest lifestyle possible that a human being can subject themselves to.

God has highly esteemed us. He has given us a priceless price tag and He has given us rules to maintain that priceless price tag. Among those rules are dietary laws. When we despise God's laws, we are despising ourselves. We neglect the high standards and welcome the low standards which we have set for ourselves, or others have set for us.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns about the risk of trichinella from pork. Trichinosis is a parasitic infection caused by eating undercooked pork infected by trichinella larvae. Pigs also harbor bacteria like salmonella and Escherichia coli (E. coli) which can cause food poisoning. Escherichia coli is an antibiotic-resistant bacterium which can lead to drug resistant bacteria that poses a serious health risk to human beings.

Processed pork products like bacon and sausages are classified as carcinogenic by the World Health Organization (WHO). These products contain nitrites and nitrates, which can form harmful compounds like nitrosamines during cooking, increasing the risk of colorectal cancer (nutritionfacts.org).

Aquatic animals

Leviticus 11:9-12 (KJ21) - “[9] These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. [10] And all that have not fins and scales in the seas and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you. [11] They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. [12] Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you."

Leviticus 11:9-12 tells us of the types of water animals that the Lord allowed us to eat. It tells us to eat only those that have both fins and scales. The ones that have no fins and scales should not be eaten. So, God forbids eating water animals such as shellfish, shrimp, crabs, lobsters, oysters among other 'fancy and tasty' seafood (except those with fins and scales). Such animals have exoskeletons (for protection, support and molting) but have no fins and scales.

These are the types of water animals that the Bible forbids us from eating (for our own benefit):

Shellfish: They are a group of aquatic animals that often have shells. This group includes crustaceans and mollusks. Examples of crustaceans are shrimps, crabs (e.g. blue crab, Dungeness crab and king crab among others). Examples of mollusks are clams (hard clam, soft-shell clam), oysters, mussels (blue mussel, green-lipped mussel), and scallops among others.

According to the FDA and CDC on Shellfish Toxins, Shellfish are a common allergen, especially crustaceans like shrimp, crab, and lobster. Shellfish allergies can be severe, sometimes causing anaphylaxis. Shellfish can carry bacteria like Vibrio and Salmonella, as well as viruses like norovirus. These can cause gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

Some shellfish accumulate heavy metals like mercury, cadmium, and lead, which can lead to toxicity over time. Mollusks, bivalves like clams and mussels, can accumulate marine toxins like saxitoxin from algae, leading to PSP, a fatal condition.

Cephalopods: They are a class of mollusks known for their soft bodies and tentacles. Examples of cephalopods are octopus, squid (e.g. giant squid, Humboldt squid), cuttlefish and Nautilus.

According to the NIH on Cephalopod Risks, squids and octopuses can accumulate heavy metals, such as mercury, which is harmful to neurological health, especially in young children and pregnant women.

Some cephalopods contain parasites that can cause infections if not properly cooked. Eating raw or undercooked cephalopods increases this risk. Certain types of squid can cause food poisoning from contaminants if harvested from polluted waters. Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps.

Jellyfish: They are gelatinous, invertebrate marine animals that lack fins and scales. They are not commonly eaten but some cultures consider them edible. Examples of jellyfish are lion's mane jellyfish, cannonball jellyfish etc.

According to the Food Safety Authority, some jellyfish can be toxic. Thus, consuming them without proper preparation can lead to symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and gastrointestinal upsetting.

Jellyfish are not common food sources, so there is a risk of improper preparation, which can lead to contamination or adverse reactions. Handling certain jellyfish poorly can cause stings, which can be painful and can lead to severe allergic reactions.

Eels: Eels are elongated fish that lack prominent scales and have a snake-like body. Examples of eels are, American eel, European eel, Conger eel and Moray eel.

Raw eel blood has toxins that can lead to muscle cramps and can be dangerous if consumed without thorough cooking (Environmental Working Group, FDA on Fish Toxins). Eels, especially those caught in the wild, may harbor parasites that are harmful to humans if not cooked properly. Certain eel species can accumulate mercury and other contaminants, which can harm the nervous system if consumed regularly.

Flying Animals

Deuteronomy 14:11-20 (AMP) - "[11] You may eat any clean bird. [12] But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, and the black buzzard, [13] and the red kite, the falcon, and the birds of prey of any variety, [14] and every raven of any variety, [15] and the ostrich, the owl, the seagull, the hawk of any variety, [16] the little owl, the great owl, the long-eared owl, [17] the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, [18] the stork, and the heron of any variety, and the hoopoe, and the bat. [19] And all flying insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. [20] You may eat any clean bird."

When we look at the characteristics of the birds that God labels as unclean, we can see that they are predatory or scavenger birds. Eagles, vultures, hawks, crows, storks, bats and others listed above eat meat. According to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, it states that eating certain birds that are typically scavengers or predators, like vultures, eagles, and ravens, comes with specific health concerns related to their diets and environments.

These birds, particularly scavengers, often feed on animal carcasses. In doing so, they can be exposed to a range of harmful pathogens and parasites—botulism, anthrax, and West Nile virus, among others—that may be passed on to humans if the meat isn't thoroughly cooked or handled properly.

Additionally, the carrion that scavengers eat can contain heavy metals like lead and mercury or toxins from poisons (such as rodenticides) that these birds can accumulate in their bodies over time. Ingesting these contaminants can lead to poisoning or other health complications if humans consume their meat.

Predatory birds, often similarly advised against for consumption, face similar risks. They may also carry contaminants such as anticoagulant rodenticides, which are substances that could cause internal bleeding if they enter the human body through contaminated meat. Furthermore, some of these birds can harbor parasites like *Trichomonas* spp., which may be transferred through raw or undercooked meat, leading to additional health concerns.

Insects

Leviticus 11:20-23 (KJ21) - "[20] All winged insects that go upon all fours shall be an abomination unto you. [21] Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all fours, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; [22] even these of them ye may eat: the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. [23] But all other flying creeping things which have four feet shall be an abomination unto you."

Leviticus 11:20-23 talks of the types of winged insects that should be eaten. Insects that should be eaten are those with joint legs allowing them to hop, such as locusts, beetles, and grasshoppers, are permissible to eat. All other insects are unclean to consume.

Reptiles and Other Creeping Creatures

Leviticus 11:29-31 (KJ21) - "[29] These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth: the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind, [30] and the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole. [31] These are unclean to you among all that creep; whosoever doth touch them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening."

This passage specifies certain small animals, particularly those that crawl or burrow, such as weasels, mice, lizards, and moles, are unclean. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention mentions various dangers of eating the forbidden animals in Leviticus 11:29-31. Here are some of the harmful health effects that the CDC mentions:

Rodents

Rodents, including weasels and mice, are well-known carriers of various diseases. Some of the most significant ones include hantavirus, leptospirosis, and lymphocytic choriomeningitis (Dahmana et al., 2020). According to the CDC and NIH, humans can contract these diseases through direct contact with the rodents themselves or with their droppings, urine, and nesting

materials. The risk of transmission highlights the importance of proper hygiene and handling when dealing with these animals.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptiles and amphibians, such as tortoises, chameleons, crocodiles, and lizards, can carry Salmonella bacteria, which can lead to severe gastrointestinal illnesses in humans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that exposure to these animals is linked to outbreaks of Salmonella infections, emphasizing the need for caution when handling them. Salmonella can also lead to gastrointestinal illnesses.

In addition to Salmonella, these creatures can harbor other parasites. A notable example is the rat lungworm (Angiostrongyliasis cantonensis), which can cause eosinophilic meningitis in humans if ingested. Consuming infected animals can lead to infection, making proper cooking and handling essential to reduce the risk of illness.

Ferrets and Other Mammals

Ferrets, along with other mammals, can pose health risks as well (Wyre, 2020). They may carry the rabies virus, and bites or scratches from infected animals can transmit this serious illness to humans. Additionally, ferrets can harbor other zoonotic diseases, such as leptospirosis, which further underscores the importance of handling these animals with care (Morrisey, 2020).

Environmental Contaminants

Many of the animals mentioned, particularly those living in or near human habitats, may accumulate environmental contaminants in their tissues. This includes heavy metals and pesticides, which can pose significant health risks to humans when we eat these animals. Eating contaminated animals can lead to poisoning and other adverse health effects.

“Upon their settlement in Canaan, the Israelites were permitted the use of animal food, but under careful restrictions which tended to lessen the evil results. The use of swine's flesh was prohibited,

as also of other animals and of birds and fish whose flesh was pronounced unclean. Of the meats permitted, the eating of the fat and the blood was strictly forbidden."– The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.3, Ellen G. White.

Even though God permits us to eat flesh foods, whether white meat or red meat, they are not the ideal diet. The ideal diet is the original diet God gave Adam and Eve before sin, a plant-based diet. Many people will enhance their physical health if they put away flesh foods. Various medical researchers have found that a vegetarian diet is healthier than a flesh diet.

"In choosing man's food in Eden, the Lord showed what was the best diet; in the choice made for Israel He taught the same lesson. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt and undertook their training, that they might be a people for His own possession. Through them He desired to bless and teach the world. He provided them with the food best adapted for this purpose, not flesh, but manna, "the bread of heaven." It was only because of their discontent and their murmuring for the fleshpots of Egypt that animal food was granted them, and this only for a short time. Its use brought disease and death to thousands. Yet the restriction to a non-flesh diet was never heartily accepted. It continued to be the cause of discontent and murmuring, open or secret, and it was not made permanent." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.2, Ellen G. White.

Some Christian diet teachers have made the dietary laws seem like a salvation issue. They make statements and implications that God will only save those who obey the Biblical standards of diet and those who do not will be lost. These dietary laws are not a salvation issue as some may mistake them for being.

Eating a vegetarian diet will not by itself take one to heaven and eating a non-vegetarian diet will not by itself cause one to be lost. But this does not mean that we should overlook our diet. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "True worship includes diet." Diet influences our mental and physical abilities. This is because the food we eat is supplied to the blood. The blood goes ahead to supply the nutrients to other organs of the body including the brain. So, the wrong food and the wrong eating habits will restrain us from a better perception of spiritual things.

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Body Exercise

1 Timothy 4:8 (KJ21) - "For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Commenting on this verse, Myron Golden says, “Little profit is better than no profit.” The Bible does not say that body exercise is useless as some people usually make it look like. It says that it profits little. Body exercise is beneficial for our health but not as beneficial as Godliness.

In 1 Timothy 4:8, Paul aims to encourage Timothy to be diligent in his ministry, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth and godliness over mere physical training. He contrasts the temporary benefits of physical exercise with the eternal value of Godliness and spiritual discipline.

Timothy was a young person at the time when Paul was addressing him in this letter. Young people spend much time and physical effort in the pursuit of material things hoping that they will give them pleasure. Many of them have minimal knowledge of the spiritual realm as they are limited to the events that they have seen in life. That is one reason why most of them make careless mistakes.

To clarify further, I would give an example. When I was a teenager, I used to think that the most talented or the most brilliant people are the ones who will succeed in life. This is because I used to view everything from a physical perspective. As I grew older and began being more intuitive, I realized that spirituality plays a major role in everything while physicality is but a drop in the large life ocean.

Physical training is important when we intertwine it with the spiritual. For example, praying and fasting for your music career to succeed is great but you should record a song and distribute it widely. When doing physical exercises, we should have this understanding too. We should involve God in our workout sessions.

We should pray against potential injuries and for God to bring out the best results from us as we exercise our bodies. We should pray for our gym instructors and workout mates as well if we have any. We should do everything to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and that includes physical exercise. How do you dress as a Christian when you are going to a public gym? Such factors should be considered as one is seeking to glorify God in their body workout sessions.

Is it wrong for a Christian (male or female) to exercise for a good body shape? I attended some Christian Bible study on health, and the moderators of that discussion implied that it is sinful to have such an ambition. They implied that those who seek to have a good-looking body have a sole ambition of attracting members of the opposite gender. In their advice, they implied that our motive for exercising should be to gain internal health alone to make us fit to serve God better.

I believed that for a while but later when I did more Bible study while reasoning through it, I realized that they were not fully correct. Our highest motive in anything that we do should be to glorify God, I do not deny that at all. However, glorifying God does not mean that we should physically appear like the most degenerated and depraved human beings.

Some Christian conservatives choose to dress poorly in the name of modesty. You will find the same people feeling jealous and gossiping about those who dress well, thus sinning through such acts. It is the same ideology that is used by those who think that making lots of money and having great material riches disqualifies one from being a Christian. Some people find it pious to represent Christianity in the lowest possible form. They think that by doing that, they are practicing the highest form of godliness.

Desiring the best body shape is not sinful. It is only sinful when your motive to have a good body is to cause someone else to sin. Our bodies ought to be in the best possible shape. Before sin, God created Adam and Eve with perfect shape and symmetrical features. Sin is what makes everything ugly, including our bodies. As much as we (as Christians) are placing the spiritual above the physical, we need to know that we are reaching out to people who have esteemed the physical on an infinitely higher level than the spiritual.

A pastor who is well kempt, dresses well and preaches the truth alone will pull a larger crowd than one who preaches the truth but is unkempt. My friend told me that she used to be reluctant to join Christianity because of how the Christian Union leaders in her high school used to look like.

A person afflicted by poverty will easily listen to advise from a flamboyantly dressed pastor (even if he is preaching error) than from one who is preaching truth but is poorly presented. As Christians we should not leave gaps, we should be excellent in what we preach and teach, and we should also be excellent in our personal lives and that includes how we present ourselves.

We should aim for the best physical appearance (that includes the appearance of our physical bodies), but we should not be so consumed in that ambition that we fail to spend time with God. Good clothes look better in good physical shape.

As a pastor, when you have a good body, you will have more attentive listeners. We live in a world where some people go to church to admire someone who goes to that church. Imagine that the person being admired is Godly. By his or her physical attractiveness in combination to the content of their character, they will easily pull someone to God. In short, it is not bad to want a good body shape as long as your motive for wanting that good body shape is to glorify God.

“More people die for want of exercise than through overfatigue; very many more rust out than wear out. Those who accustom themselves to proper exercise in the open air, will generally have a good and vigorous circulation. We are more dependent upon the air we breathe than upon the food we eat. Men and women, young and old, who desire health, and who would enjoy active life should remember that they cannot have these without a good circulation. Whatever their business and inclinations, they should make up their minds to exercise in the open air as much as they can. They should feel it a religious duty to overcome the conditions of health which have kept them confined indoors, deprived of exercise in the open air.” - Counsels on Health, Page 173.2, Ellen G. White.

People who engage in regular, proper outdoor exercise have better blood circulation and health. Good blood circulation improves oxygen and nutrient delivery throughout the body. It is vital for maintaining energy, preventing illnesses, and supporting mental and physical functions. Modern health research supports this idea, showing that outdoor physical activity benefits cardiovascular health, immune function, and mental well-being

Breathing fresh air is even more crucial to our well-being than the food we consume. Fresh air supplies our body with oxygen, which is essential for cellular processes and energy production. Spending time in natural environments can reduce stress, enhance mood, and improve physical health outcomes

For those confined indoors due to work or lifestyle, Ellen White’s passage frames outdoor exercise as a "religious duty," underlining its necessity. It encourages individuals to make a conscious effort

to prioritize outdoor activity for their health, particularly for those whose indoor lifestyle limits their exposure to fresh air and natural movement.

“Those who are feeble and indolent should not yield to their inclination to be inactive, thus depriving themselves of air and sunlight, but should practice exercising out of doors in walking or working in the garden. They will become very much fatigued, but this will not injure them.... It is not good policy to give up the use of certain muscles because pain is felt when they are exercised. The pain is frequently caused by the effort of nature to give life and vigor to those parts that have become partially lifeless through inaction. The motion of these long-disused muscles will cause pain, because nature is awakening them to life.” - Counsels on Health, Page 200.1, Ellen G. White.

“Walking, in all cases where it is possible, is the best remedy for diseased bodies, because in this exercise all the organs of the body are brought into use. Many who depend upon the movement cure could accomplish more for themselves by muscular exercise than the movements can do for them. In some cases, want of exercise causes the bowels and muscles to become enfeebled and shrunken, and these organs that have become enfeebled for want of use will be strengthened by exercise. There is no exercise that can take the place of walking. By it the circulation of the blood is greatly improved.” —Testimonies for the Church 3:78 (1871), Ellen G. White.

Walking is very beneficial. Most health experts recommend that one should walk at least 10,000 steps a day. Walking has many benefits such as: improving cardiovascular health, strengthening bones and improving mental well-being.

“Physical exercise and labor combined have a happy influence upon the mind, strengthen the muscles, improve the circulation, and give the invalid the satisfaction of knowing his own power of endurance; whereas, if he is restricted from healthful exercise and physical labor, his attention is turned to himself. He is in constant danger of thinking himself worse than he really is, and of having established within him a diseased imagination which causes him to continually fear that he is overtaxing his powers of endurance. As a general thing, if he should engage in some well-directed labor, using his strength and not abusing it, he would find that physical exercise would prove a more powerful and effective agent in his recovery than even the water treatment he is receiving.” - Counsels on Health, Page 201.1, Ellen G. White.

“The inactivity of the mental and physical powers, as far as useful labor is concerned, is that which keeps many invalids in a condition of feebleness which they feel powerless to rise above. It also gives them a greater opportunity to indulge an impure imagination—an indulgence which has brought many of them into their present condition of feebleness. They are told that they have expended too much vitality in hard labor, when, in nine cases out of ten, the labor they performed was the only redeeming thing in their lives and was the means of saving them from utter ruin. While their minds were thus engaged they could not have as favorable an opportunity to debase their bodies and to complete the work of destroying themselves. To have all such persons cease to labor with brain and muscle is to give them ample opportunity to be taken captive by the temptations of Satan.” —Testimonies for the Church 4:94, 95 (1876), Ellen G. White.

Water

Genesis 21:15-19 (AMP) - “[15] When the water in the skin was all gone, Hagar abandoned the boy under one of the bushes. [16] Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And as she sat down opposite him, she raised her voice and wept. [17] God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy from where he is [resting]. [18] Get up, help the boy up, and hold him by the hand, for I will make him a great nation.” [19] Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the empty skin with water and gave the boy a drink.”

When Haggar and her son Ishmael left Abraham’s house, they carried food (bread) to eat and water to drink (Genesis 21:14). It reached a point where they finished the water (Genesis 2:15). They probably still had the food with them. We do not know about this because the Bible says nothing about the food, whether it was there or not. The Bible only talks about water. Thus, putting an emphasis on the water.

When God opened Hagar’s eyes, she did not see food, she saw a well of water. This emphasis shows how important water is to the body of a person. Hagar gave her son water and Ishamel was able to survive. I believe you have heard the saying which says, “You can live for many days

without food, but only for a few days without water." Water is more vital than food to sustain the life of a human being. Therefore, it should not be neglected.

"In health and in sickness, pure water is one of Heaven's choicest blessings. Its proper use promotes health. It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. Drunk freely, it helps to supply the necessities of the system, and assists nature to resist disease." — The Ministry of Healing, 237, 1905, Ellen G. White.

"I should eat sparingly, thus relieving my system of unnecessary burden, and should encourage cheerfulness, and give myself the benefits of proper exercise in the open air. I should bathe frequently, and drink freely of pure, soft water." — The Health Reformer, January 1871, Ellen G. White.

"If, in their fevered state, water had been given them to drink freely, and applications had also been made externally, long days and nights of suffering would have been saved, and many precious lives spared. But thousands have died with raging fevers consuming them, until the fuel which fed the fever was burned up, the vitals consumed, and have died in the greatest agony, without being permitted to have water to allay their burning thirst. Water, which is allowed a senseless building to put out the raging elements, is not allowed human beings to put out the fire which is consuming the vitals." — How to Live 3:62, 63, 186, Ellen G. White.

"Many make a mistake in drinking cold water with their meals. Taken with meals, water diminishes the flow of the salivary glands; and the colder the water, the greater the injury to the stomach. Ice water or ice lemonade, drunk with meals, will arrest digestion until the system has imparted sufficient warmth to the stomach to enable it to take up its work again. Hot drinks are debilitating; and besides, those who indulge in their use become slaves to the habit. Food should not be washed down; no drink is needed with meals. Eat slowly, and allow the saliva to mingle with the food. The more liquid there is taken into the stomach with the meals, the more difficult it is for the food to digest; for the liquid must first be absorbed. Do not eat largely of salt; give up bottled pickles; keep fiery spiced food out of your stomach; eat fruit with your meals, and the irritation which calls for so much drink will cease to exist. But if anything is needed to quench thirst, pure water, drunk some little time before or after the meal, is all that nature requires. Never take tea, coffee, beer, wine, or any spirituous liquors. Water is the best liquid possible to cleanse the tissues." —The Review and Herald, July 29, 1884, Ellen G. White.

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Air

Genesis 2:7 (KJV) - "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

After God formed man from dust, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. In other words, God breathed air into man. Air is essential for our survival. It is more essential than food and water. After God modeled man with dust, the Lord did not give him food, nor did He give him water. He gave him air. After breathing the breath of life into man, man became a living soul. This shows us how essential air is for our sustenance. Therefore, we should not neglect it.

We should have outdoor walks to breathe fresh air. We should ventilate our rooms and houses. Country living is better for our health than city life because the environment is filled with nature. The many trees and surrounding vegetation purify the air while the air in the city is often polluted.

Before sin, God did not place Adam and Eve in a house. He placed them in a garden. They were to enjoy the rich vegetation, communion with the animals and the abundance of air in the environment of Eden. At that time the weather and conditions of living outside were perfect unlike now. That does not mean we should neglect outdoor activities. We should treasure outdoor activities and spend more time with nature.

When fresh air infiltrates your mind, you become more productive. New ideas, a higher level of creativity and memory retention will be attained. The air that you breathe comes from God as God is the One who created it. Thus, spending time in the abundance of it, brings you into closer communion with God, allowing God to do mighty works through you.

I have often experienced this: When I take a short outdoor break when writing or when doing any other creative work, I get better ideas and a better understanding of how to do that work. Sometimes, I do not understand a Bible text when studying it. When I decide to take an outdoor walk, I gain more understanding and revelation to it.

“Air, air, the precious boon of heaven, which all may have, will bless you with its invigorating influence, if you will not refuse it entrance. Welcome it, cultivate a love for it, and it will prove a precious soother of the nerves. Air must be in constant circulation to be kept pure. The influence

of pure, fresh air is to cause the blood to circulate healthfully through the system. It refreshes the body and tends to render it strong and healthy, while at the same time its influence is decidedly felt upon the mind, imparting a degree of composure and serenity. It excites the appetite, and renders the digestion of food more perfect, and induces sound and sweet sleep." — Testimonies for the Church 1:702 (1870), Ellen G. White.

After you finish eating, do not go to class or watch a movie or even go to bed to sleep. Go outside and take a digestive walk to breathe fresh air. Ellen G. White says that it will prove a precious soother of the nerves. Fresh air relieves pain and that includes mental pain. It makes your blood circulate freely, that is why it is important to do body exercises in fresh air. It refreshes the body and makes it stronger and healthier.

If you want to start a fitness business or want to have a gym in your home, ensure it is well ventilated. The breathing of fresh air makes your mind more composed and gives one a sweet sound sleep. Sometimes insomnia is caused by confining yourself to one place for a long time. In such instances, you can cure it by engaging more in outdoor activity.

"In no case should sick persons be deprived of a full supply of fresh air in pleasant weather. Their rooms may not always be so constructed as to allow the windows or doors to be opened, without the draft coming directly upon them, thus exposing them to the taking of cold. In such cases windows and doors should be opened in an adjoining room, thus letting fresh air enter the room occupied by the sick. Fresh air will prove far more beneficial to sick persons than medicine, and is far more essential to them than their food. They will do better, and will recover sooner, when deprived of food, than when deprived of fresh air." - Counsels on Health, Page 55.1, Ellen G. White.

We often think that food is the most essential thing that a human being must have. So, we strive hard to get it. It would be beneficial to a great degree for our health when we strive to get fresh air as we do to get food. Scientists have conducted studies and have shown that eating less is more beneficial to the body than eating more.

When it comes to air, the reverse is true. Taking more fresh oxygen is more beneficial to the body than taking less air. This analogy shows that we need more air than food. Proper ventilation should

be provided in hospitals. The sick should be given time outdoors to breathe in fresh air. When hospitals do this, there will be a great improvement in the physical health of the patients.

“The chief if not the only reason why many become invalids is that the blood does not circulate freely, and the changes in the vital fluid, which are necessary to life and health, do not take place. They have not given their bodies exercise nor their lungs food, which is pure, fresh air; therefore it is impossible for the blood to be vitalized, and it pursues its course sluggishly through the system.” - Counsels on Health, Page 173.1, Ellen G. White.

“Thousands have died for want of pure water and pure air who might have lived. And thousands of invalids, who are a burden to themselves and others, think that their lives depend upon taking medicines from the doctors. They are continually guarding themselves against the air and avoiding the use of water. These blessings they need in order to become well. If they would become enlightened and let medicine alone, and accustom themselves to outdoor exercise and to air in their houses, summer and winter, and use soft water for drinking and bathing purposes, they would be comparatively well and happy instead of dragging out a miserable existence.” - Counsels on Health, Page 55.3, Ellen G. White.

Sunlight

“If you would have your homes sweet and inviting, make them bright with air and sunshine. Remove your heavy curtains, open the windows, throw back the blinds, and enjoy the rich sunlight, even if it be at the expense of the colors of your carpets. The precious sunlight may fade your carpets, but it will give a healthful color to the cheeks of your children. If you have God's presence and possess earnest, loving hearts, a humble home, made bright with air and sunlight, and cheerful with the welcome of unselfish hospitality, will be to your family and to the weary traveler a heaven below.” — Testimonies for the Church 2:527 (1870), Ellen G. White.

Sunlight is a wonderful natural remedy. Some people avoid it by stating that exposure to sunlight will make their skin darker. We do ourselves harm beyond our imagination when we stay indoors the entire day devoid of air and sunlight. Rarely do we open our windows. Therefore, we never experience the natural remedies that God has ordained for us.

Ecclesiastes 11:7 (KJ21) - "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

The Bible says that it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. I was volunteering in the camp meeting of Syokimau Central Seventh Day Adventist Church and a certain lady who was also volunteering gave a testimony that links with this verse. She said that her eyes were healed that week because of exposure to sunlight. She said that she had been sitting in the sun for long hours during the week because her work entailed being in the sun. The sun was quite hot at that time. However, it proved to be a transforming remedy to that lady's eyes.

I went and did some research, and I found that it is true that sunlight improves eye health. Sunlight has various other benefits. It enables the skin to produce vitamin D. It enhances the immune system. It lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk of heart disease. It regulates the body's circadian rhythm. It improves sleep quality and energy levels. It triggers the release of serotonin; a neurotransmitter that boosts mood and helps prevent depression.

Good Hygiene

Deuteronomy 23:12-14 (NKJV) - "[12] "Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; [13] and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. [14] For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you."

The phrase, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," is not explicitly written in the Bible but the verse above supports it. God commanded the Israelites to have a clean camp. He told them that He would walk amid their camp and deliver their enemies to them. He made it clear to them that the camp is holy and for that reason, nothing unclean should be seen in it.

Holiness and uncleanliness are like two parallel lines, they can never meet, they are like two orthogonal perpendicular vectors, they do not head in the same direction. When Moses saw a bush burning and he was about to enter it, God told him to remove his shoes because he was entering a holy ground. God commanded the priests to wash their hands and feet outside before performing

sacrifices to God and entering the sanctuary. These examples show us that God wants us to be clean and tidy.

When you clean your room and make your bed, you will find it a delight to live in it. If you conduct work or studies there, you will feel comfortable working or studying there. You will have more concentration while doing your work. Many people lose the mood to work and end up being less productive because their surroundings are dirty and untidy.

Others do not want to stay for long in their houses and spend a lot of time in other people's houses because their own houses are dirty. It is of great benefit to us when we clean our surroundings. Cleaning our surroundings does not only mean the places we own. It also means our environment. When you see litter on the streets, do not hesitate to bend down to pick it even if you are not the one who threw it. Cleanliness should surround Christians wherever they go.

1 Corinthians 6:19-21 (KJ21) - "[19] What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you and which ye have from God, and that ye are not your own? [20] For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

You are not your own. You are bought with a price. God gave you dominion, not ownership. The Lord gave you stewardship, not ownership. Therefore, take good care of whatever He has given you in the best way that you can. That includes ensuring that your body is clean. Inward cleanliness is the most important but outward cleanliness should not be neglected.

Wash your body thoroughly, brush your teeth, clean your nails, ensure your hair is tidy, and dress well. In general, practice good hygiene and be presentable. When you are hygienic and presentable, people will want to hang around you. Therefore, you will have a ready audience to preach God's Word to. When you dress well, people perceive you to be an interesting and an excellent person. They will want to learn more from you, and it will be easier to teach them the Word of God.

"The children of Israel were in no case to allow any impurities to remain upon their clothing or upon themselves. Those who had any personal uncleanness were to be shut out of the camp until the evening, and then were required to cleanse themselves and their clothing before they could return. They were also commanded to carry all their refuse to a great distance from the camp. And this was a sanitary measure, as well as a religious regulation. The Lord requires no less of his people now than he did anciently. A neglect of cleanliness will induce disease. Sickness does not

come without a cause. Violent epidemics of fevers have occurred in villages and cities that were considered perfectly healthful, and these have resulted in death or broken constitutions. In many instances the premises of the very ones who fell victims to these epidemics, contained the agents of destruction which sent forth deadly poison into the atmosphere, to be inhaled by the family and the neighborhood. It is astonishing to witness the prevailing ignorance relative to the effects which slackness and recklessness produce upon health." - Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, Page 332.2, Ellen G. White.

"When Lord Palmerston, premier of England, was petitioned by the Scottish clergy to appoint a day of fasting and prayer to avert the cholera, he replied, "Cleanse and disinfect your streets and houses, promote cleanliness and health among the poor, and see that they are plentifully supplied with good food and raiment, and employ right sanitary measures generally, and you will have no occasion to fast and pray. Nor will the Lord hear your prayers while these, his preventives, remain unheeded."" - Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, Page 106.1, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 23:25-26 (NKJV) - "[25] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. [26] Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."

Inside and outside represent the whole thing. The Pharisees were outwardly clean but not inwardly. Jesus told them to be clean from the outside and in the inside as well. Do this for your spirituality, for your health and for your general hygiene and watch the seamless functioning of your soul and body.

More Health info and Anti-aging

Fasting is considered to have potential benefits for anti-aging and overall cellular health. Research into different types of fasting, such as intermittent fasting and caloric restriction, suggests that it may contribute to slowing down the aging process in several ways. Fasting promotes a process called autophagy, where the body clears out damaged cells and regenerates new, healthy ones. This cleanup process can reduce cellular damage that contributes to aging.

Fasting can lower oxidative stress in the body by reducing the production of free radicals. Oxidative stress damages cells and accelerates aging. Therefore, lowering it may help the body stay healthier for longer. As we age, our cells often become less sensitive to insulin, increasing the risk of metabolic diseases like diabetes. Fasting has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity, which supports better blood sugar regulation and metabolic health.

Fasting has been linked to a temporary boost in human growth hormone. The human growth hormone helps maintain muscle mass, bone density, and skin health, all of which can contribute to a young-looking appearance and function. By giving the digestive system a break, fasting may help the body increase the efficiency of mitochondria, the energy-producing structures in cells. Healthy mitochondria are crucial for energy levels and are linked to longevity.

In his YouTube video, "Healing Foods Found in the Bible," Dr. Brian Paris mentions various foods that the Bible has listed, such as honey, olives, bitter herbs, flax seeds, pomegranates, and grapes among others. He talks highly of grapes and mentions them as the best among all those other mentioned foods. He even says that Jesus was fond of it. The Bible mentions grapes and grape vines many times (in verses such as: John 15:1-5, Isaiah 5:1-2, Deuteronomy 8:7-8, Numbers 13:23, Micah 4:4, Jeremiah 31:29-30, and Genesis 49:11 among others).

Talking about grapes, he says that grapes have a compound called resveratrol. This compound can be found in other foods such as: blueberries, cranberries, mulberries, peanuts, pistachios, dark chocolate and cocoa products and Japanese Knotweed.

Studies have been done and have shown that resveratrol has strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. It activates the SIRT1 Gene which is known as the longevity gene. Resveratrol can modulate stem cells that can self-renew. Dr. Brian said that resveratrol is currently being studied as a cure for osteoporosis. He also talks of an anti-aging molecule known as Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD+). Foods that are widely known to be rich in this molecule are: cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumbers and mushrooms.

82-year-old (as of now: 2024) Annette Larkins has a very youthful appearance. The mainstream media calls her, "The ageless woman." She has written books and spoken at various places on healthy living. People are astonished when they hear she is over eighty years old because of her

young-looking appearance. She emphasizes the importance of adopting a positive mindset as one of her secrets of age reversing. She has also adopted a raw vegan diet.

Taking good care of one's health has countless benefits. Talking of the Seventh Day Adventist Health Message, Pastor Randy Skeete says, "The health message is not necessarily meant to make you live long but to live well as long as you live." Poor health is not the only cause of death, but it is a major cause of death.

The Seventh Day Adventists in Loma Linda, California, are among the five blue zones in the world. Blue zones are areas where people are said to live longer than usual. I have never been physically there. I have been told by people who live there that it is common to see people over one hundred years old in the city of Loma Linda driving themselves and doing other vigorous physical activities. Alcohol and tobacco are rarely sold in Loma Linda. Many people in that city have adopted a vegetarian diet and the Sabbath is widely observed as it should be.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Let us believe when we pray that God has healed us and ask Him to give us the temperance to abide by His appointed health laws.

Success in Our Character Development

"God's purpose is ... to save from sin.... The soul, corrupted and deformed, is to be purified, transformed." - Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 61, Ellen G. White.

Philippians 4:13 (KJV) – "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Adam and Eve's sin weakened the entire human race. Therefore, we are all born as weak individuals. The more we sin, the weaker we become. We may appear physically strong, but physical strength is not

as important as mental or spiritual strength. Secondly, we would be physically more robust than we are now if we did not have that sinful nature.

Paul is speaking a word of faith upon his weak nature. Paul acknowledges that he is not strong enough to do everything. Therefore, he says, “I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me.” God has infinite strength. When we rely on His strength and not our weaknesses, there is nothing we cannot do.

Therefore, whatever bad habit you have that you are struggling with, ask God to help you overcome it. People may advise you on how to stop it, but that advice may work on some and fail on others. It is God’s power alone that can loosen the tight chains of sin.

Drug addiction is difficult for a human being to overcome, but it is not difficult for God. Greed, gluttony, poor money and time management, homosexuality, masturbation, drug abuse, fornication, adultery, and all other lustful habits might be problematic for humans to stop but not difficult for God. We should surrender ourselves to God, earnestly praying to Him to make us victorious over all sins. In James 4:7 (KJV), the Bible says, " Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Satan flees from the person who has submitted themselves to God. However, he does not flee forever. He runs away for a short time and then comes back. Matthew 12:43-45 (KJV) – “**43** When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. **44** Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. **45** Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

Once a demon is driven out of a man, it returns to that same person with seven other spirits that are more wicked than himself. Therefore, our submission to God should be daily, even hourly, if we want to be safe. Ellen G. White writes, “No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer.” – The Great Controversy, Page 530.2, Ellen G. White.

Mark 11:24 (KJV) – “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

When we pray for good character, God will surely give us because it is His will for us to have noble character. One may find it challenging to stop sins like gossiping, intemperance in diet, discouraging people, and white lies. Take a notebook and fill out all the evil traits you think you have. Be honest with yourself. Pray over them daily, and God will surely help you out of them.

"**Prayer Brings Increased Spiritual Strength**—Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain. "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal." – Prayer, Page 82.1, Ellen G. White.

Deuteronomy 28:9 (KJV) – "The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways."

"His law is the echo of His own voice, giving to all the invitation, "Come up higher. Be holy, holier still." Every day we may advance in perfection of Christian character." - The Ministry of Healing, Page 503, Ellen G. White.

One of the blessings of obedience is spiritual growth and character development. When you successfully overcome one temptation through the power of Christ, you gain the strength to overcome the next temptation. Obedience leads to more obedience. Therefore, we should take that step of faith and purpose to obey everything God says. We should ask God to help us and believe He has helped us. If we do so, our lights will keep shining brighter, and we will eliminate all evil traits in our personality.

"We gain ... strength by walking in the light, that we may have energy to run in the way of God's commandments. We may gain an increase of strength at every step we advance heavenward." – The Faith I Live By, Page 95.7, Ellen G. White.

Proverbs 4:18 (KJV) – "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

“Distrust of God is the natural outgrowth of the unrenewed heart, which is at enmity with Him. But faith is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it will flourish only as it is cherished. No man can become strong in faith without a determined effort. Unbelief strengthens as it is encouraged; and if men, instead of dwelling upon the evidences which God has given to sustain their faith, permit themselves to question and cavil, they will find their doubts constantly becoming more confirmed.” – The Great Controversy, Page 527.3, Ellen G. White.

“Fine Mental Qualities Not the Result of Accident—True success in any line of work is not the result of chance or accident or destiny. It is the outworking of God's providences, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and perseverance. Fine mental qualities and a high moral tone are not the result of accident. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them.” – Mind Character and Personality, Volume 1, Page 100.1, Ellen G. White.

“As the stars tell us that there is a great light in heaven with whose glory they are made bright, so Christians are to make it manifest that there is a God on the throne of the universe whose character is worthy of praise and imitation.” – The Great Controversy, Page 476, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. When we pray to God to transform our character, we must believe He has already transformed it.

Success in Inheriting Eternal Life

Mark 19:24-26 (KJV) – "[24] And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. [25] When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? [26] But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

The distance between heaven and earth is unfathomable. However difficult it seems; we can access all places on earth if we are determined enough. We can enter palaces and presidents' houses no matter how tight the security is because there is no perfect human security.

All human-based security has loopholes. This is because they are on earth. If you are in Kenya and want to go to the White House in America, you only have to take an airplane to Washington D.C. When you arrive in Washington, you can take a taxi or walk to the white house. The security there might not let you in, especially if you are an ordinary citizen, but you will be able to see it from outside and know its exact location. If you are a wealthy man or government minister or president, it might be easier for you to enter. Heaven is not like that.

No rocket or any other technologically advanced tool can access heaven. No amount of money can give one access to heaven. No level of human power or intellect can open the pearly gates of heaven. That is why Jesus says, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." The Grace of God alone, through our faith in Him, can give us access to the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast."

"Its not you, then, that do the saving. If you could save yourself, that very fact would show that you were not lost. "It is God that worketh." Ephesians 2:13. Your part is to receive Him by faith. "But I don't feel as I ought to; I cannot feel that I am saved." If you have never been saved, how do you know how you ought to feel? You don't know how a *saved* man feels. If you depend on feeling, you will never know whether you are saved or not, for you will never be sure that you have the right feeling. You may think you are saved all right, and then have your feelings give way and leave you more uncertain than ever. Our feelings are always changing." – Salvation in Jesus Christ, Page 1.4, Ellet Joseph Waggoner.

Always place faith above feelings. Feelings change, but faith needs to be constant in a Christian's life. We should have faith that God has saved us by grace. There is no amount of money that we have paid God or work that we have done for Him to save us. The grace He has given us is unmerited. We do not deserve it. He gives us out of love because He does not want anyone lost. His grace is in abundance, and it is sufficient for us all.

Romans 6:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? [2] God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

"It is the sophistry of Satan that the death of Christ brought in grace to take the place of the law. The death of Jesus did not change, or annul, or lessen in the slightest degree, the law of ten commandments. That precious grace offered to men through a Saviour's blood, establishes the law of God. Since the fall of man, God's moral government and His grace are inseparable. They go hand in hand through all dispensations. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10." - The Review and Herald, March 8, 1881, Ellen G. White.

Many have misunderstood the message of grace and translated it to mean that since God has given us grace, we are free to do whatever we want. Many have deceived themselves with this theory and have chosen not to let go of their sins. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It is not an open ticket to sin. When we experience the Grace of God, we should submit ourselves to God and have the Holy Spirit work in us to make us brand new Godly people.

"The gospel of the New Testament is not the Old Testament standard lowered to meet the sinner and save him in his sins. God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments." – The Faith I Live By, Page 88.9, Ellen. G. White.

Exodus 19:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. [5] Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."

There is nothing the Israelites did for God to save them from slavery/captivity by the Egyptians. It was by grace. God tells them, "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings." In other words, God tells them they have witnessed His saving power entirely by grace. Therefore, if they want to maintain or increase the blessings He has given them, they should obey His voice and keep His covenant. If they do that, God promises they will be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people.

We shall encounter more blessings if we obey God's commandments, and one of those blessings is inheriting eternal life. Obedience to the commandments cannot save you. Salvation is entirely

by grace. However, obeying God is a demonstration of the love and faith we have for God. It is a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power that is working in us after we get saved.

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) – "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

The Bible places priceless value on those who genuinely and earnestly obey the commandments of God. Such will have access to a currently inaccessible tree (Genesis 3:24), the tree of life. Such will live eternally, enjoying communion with God and the heaven family.

"The discipline in the school of Christ will cause the church to lean upon the arm of her Beloved. The redeemed of the Lord shall at last come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, in victorious triumph. All the angelic hosts will rejoice over them with singing. But what are the qualifications of our citizenship? "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." – That I May Know Him, Page 353, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 5:19 (KJV) – "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

True Faith is portrayed in obeying all the Ten Commandments. Many Christians choose the commandments they are most comfortable obeying and neglect the ones that are not convenient. God wants us to obey all of them. Over 95% of people in the Christian world faithfully keep nine commandments but neglect the Sabbath commandment. Even after knowing the truth, some do not want to keep it because they were born into families that don't keep it, so they choose to follow tradition rather than the truth.

Some gospel ministers teach that the commandments were done away with at the cross. The book of Revelation was written years after Jesus died on the cross, but it still tells us in Revelation 22:14 that obedience to God will give us access to the Tree of Life.

Those ministers and people who teach that the commandments are unnecessary will suffer greater punishment because of their widespread evil influence. Some teach that the Sabbath can be any day, while the Word of God says it is the seventh day.

The world is in great jeopardy and has less unity, especially among Christians, because everyone has decided to keep their own Sabbath day and not the proper Sabbath that the Bible commands. Such teachings present God as a haphazard God.

Matthew 19:24 (KJV) – "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Matthew 5:3 (KJV) – "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Christ's first words to the people on the mount were words of blessing. Happy are they, He said, who recognize their spiritual poverty, and feel their need of redemption. The gospel is to be preached to the poor. Not to the spiritually proud, those who claim to be rich and in need of nothing, is it revealed, but to those who are humble and contrite. One fountain only has been opened for sin, a fountain for the poor in spirit." – The Desire of Ages, Page 300, Ellen G. White.

"The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15." - The Desire of Ages, Page 300, Ellen G. White.

Self-righteousness is a sin. One who is spiritually rich shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven because he feels perfect and thinks he does not need to do more. No matter how good you are, there is always room for improvement. We all come short of the God's glory.

Let no one be satisfied by their spiritual state. This will limit our growth and will make us stagnate in Christianity. We should not focus so much on the good things we have done in the past. Instead, we should always be looking out for opportunities to do more. Daily, we are to place our weaknesses at the feet of Jesus and ask Him for strength to make us victorious each day.

“No man can become strong in faith without a determined effort.”– The Great Controversy, Page 527.3, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. We shall inherit eternal life if we live by faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me have faith and erase all doubt in my heart. Make me have more hope in You and in the promises that You have given me. Please give me success in my spiritual life, character development, health, education, career, family, and social relations. Above all, help me not to miss out on the ultimate promise of eternal life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Review the various areas of your life: Your spiritual life, your character development, your health, your social life, your family, your education, your career, and your finances. Prayerfully set goals in each of these areas and write them down, then pray daily over those goals.
2. Get a journal or notebook with all these columns (your spiritual life, your character development, your health, your social life, your family, your education, your career, and your finances), and do a daily evaluation of what you have added to each aspect of your life.
3. Evaluate at the end of each week (on Friday) which aspect of your life has scored the highest and which ones have been the lowest. Prayerfully come up with effective strategies on how you will improve on the ones with the lowest scores.

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CHAPTER 2

FAITH – THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

Faith is the evidence of things not seen,

Total trust in God will make you win,

Holding onto the invisible, Holding onto the holy unseen,

Replacing fear of the unseen with faith in the unseen.

Seeing is believing, and believing is seeing,

Blessed is one who believes before seeing,

Trusting the One who knows the end from the beginning,

Firmly believing that Christ is the One and only king.

Have your shield of faith, Don't let doubt come close,

Embrace positive emotions; let them bloom like a rose,

God, the great physician, has prescribed a daily dose,

Of reading the Bible, that evil shall not come close.

Faith is full proof; you need no other,

By faith, we should love God and love one another,

The Holy Spirit, Christ and God the Father,

Have given you the best book, better than all the others.

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Introduction

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

We looked at the first part of Hebrews 11:1, which says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Now we will look at the second part of the same verse, which says, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

The King James Version says, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." The New International Version says, "Faith is the assurance about what we do not see." The English Standard Version says, "Faith is the conviction of things not seen." The Amplified Bible Classic Edition states, "Faith is the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]."

Synonyms for evidence – Proof, confirmation, verification, corroboration.

Oxford Dictionary definition of Evidence - the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is valid.

Oxford Dictionary definition of Assurance – a positive declaration intended to give confidence; a promise.

Oxford Dictionary definition of Conviction - a firmly held belief or opinion.

Faith is the evidence, assurance, confirmation or proof of invisible things. Ellen G. White says that Faith is not certainty of knowledge. Faith goes beyond human knowledge; it goes beyond human understanding and wisdom. Therefore, faith needs to come before knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – "Through faith, we understand." If we have faith, we shall be able to acquire, understand and apply the only true knowledge, which is the Word of God.

“It is not essential to the exercise of faith that the feelings should be wrought up to a high pitch of excitement; neither is it necessary, in order to gain the hearing of the Lord, that our petitions should be noisy, or attended with physical exercise.” – The Faith I live By, Page 122, Ellen G. White.

Exercising faith is more than shouting when worshipping. It is more than feeling excited after hearing a sermon or reading and understanding a portion of scripture. Faith goes beyond feeling.

There is no problem with feeling excited or convicted, but faith goes beyond this. Faith is believing that everything will work out together for good (Romans 8:28) even when things are not going your way because you are not trusting in your power to make them work out but in the power of the Almighty.

Through faith, a person can maintain a positive mindset despite their circumstances. In his book, As A Man Thinketh, James Allen says, "A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly yet surely, shape his circumstances." Our circumstances are often beyond our control, but our thoughts are within our control.

We can control, to a large degree, what enters our minds by being careful of the things we watch and listen to. Some of the things that enter our eyes and ears negatively influence our minds and only result in the degradation of our thoughts and reasoning capacity.

If we stop watching, listening to, and reading material that is evil, we shall bring great healing to our minds. And if we become intentional about spending more time on God's Word and material that will have us spiritually inclined, our thoughts will be elevated as high as Heaven. Proverbs 25:2 (KJV) – "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter." God conceals matters in His Word. Kings receive glory when they diligently study the Word of God, searching for underlying truths. They receive great honour when they apply it. Myron Golden says, "Your best chance at your best life is to make the Word of God your life study."

Faith is not believing that God will do as you say, but it is believing that God will do as He says. God is not indebted to fulfil your word, but He is obliged to fulfil His Word. Numbers 23:19 (KJV) – "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Psalm 138:2 (KJV) – "For Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name." God has placed His Word above all His names; therefore, if He makes a promise, He shall surely do it because, unlike us, He cannot go against His Word.

"Will I always get what I want? No! But I will always get what God wants. The same is true for you. Whether you are a Christian or not, you must never think that simply believing in something is enough. You can believe in your dreams, but you have to take action to make them happen. You can believe in your talents and have faith in your abilities, but if you don't develop them and put

them to use, what good are they? You can believe that you are a good and caring person, but if you don’t treat others with goodness and care, where is the proof?” – Unstoppable: The Incredible Power of Faith in Action, Nick Vujicic.

If what you want is in line with the will of God, you will get it. To get familiar with the will of God, you need to study His Word. Believing is beyond feelings. A belief is more grounded and is proved when one acts on it. A famous saying goes, "If you don't live it, then you don't believe it."

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We must act promptly with certainty and a high conviction on the invisible, not just the visible. If we have a Godly business idea, we need to put our effort into it, believing it will succeed even before it succeeds. We must seek God and His righteousness wholeheartedly, even though we don't see Him.

We should live by faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). If we wait to see before acting, we will accomplish nothing. Many have had opportunities slide through their fingers and get entirely lost because of uncertainty avoidance. Some regretted it when they later realized the magnitude of the opportunities they lost.

Esau lost his birthright and blessing. The Bible says he sought his blessing with tears after losing it (Hebrews 12:17), but it was forever gone. Many of you might have realized this; you may have a unique idea but procrastinate or refuse to work on it. Once you fail to work on it, it doesn't take long to see someone else flourishing with the idea you once had because God's purpose must be fulfilled.

The same God who kept that idea in your imagination can put it in someone else's imagination if you fail to work on it. He gives everyone equal chances. He expects you to depend on Him to help you with your shortcomings while working on your purpose.

The difference between those who are successful and those who are not is not the absence of opportunities for some and the presence of opportunities for others. It is faith that makes the difference. Not all highly successful people in the world are Christians, but all people who have succeeded have had an element of faith. They believed in the unseen and influenced others to do the same before it was manifested in the physical realm.

John 20:29 (KJV) – “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Thomas could not believe in Jesus without seeing proof. Before the flood, only Noah and his family were saved because people chose not to believe in God. They did not believe a flood would come because they had never seen rain since God created the world. While leaning on their own understanding, they could not comprehend a scenario in that rain would fall and cover the whole earth because it had never happened.

Many people with their hearts clouded with doubt never imagine getting to the next level because they have not yet been on that level. For example, some do not believe it is possible to get married because they have not yet married.

Others do not think it is possible to start a successful business because they have never started a successful business. While others do not believe it is possible to gain victory over a particular sin because they haven’t been able to overcome it.

God told Abraham to get from the land of the familiar and go to the land of the unfamiliar and promised to bless him if he did that (Genesis 12:1-3). Therefore, you do not need to understand or be familiar with where God is taking you; you should have faith. Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – "Through faith we understand." A successful life is a life that puts faith before understanding and familiarity. God wants to take you to places you can't take yourself and give you things you can't get yourself if you have faith.

"Faith is not feeling.... True faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption, for presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith." - The Faith I Live by, Page 122, Ellen G. White.

We all believe in something. However, the only faith that works is faith in God. Some might argue that they have been successful without having faith in God. That is not true success. The little success they have gained would not be possible if God did not allow it.

Faith is not presumption nor linked to it in any way whatsoever. Faith in God is not based on probability. Faith is not commanding God to obey your word. It is yielding to God's Word and believing that God will do as He says. God's Word leaves no room or space for uncertainty. God's

Word is like a contract and a stamp simultaneously. It says something, and it approves itself. Therefore, be still for God is in control.

The creation account teaches us that God's Word is reliable. Genesis 1:3 (KJV) – “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” All through Genesis 1, we see that whatever God commands to appear, it appears. Pastor Randy Skeete says, “The Word of God is more reliable than the fact that the day after Wednesday is Thursday.” He also says, “Faith is trusting the impossible simply because the Word of God says so.”

Titus 1:2 says that God cannot lie. Hebrews 6:18 says that it is impossible for God to lie. Someone can discourage you by telling you, you will never stop a particular sinful addiction that you are having, but the Word of God says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)." It is upon you to choose to believe that person's word or God's Word.

Mark 11:23 (KJV) – “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

People have succeeded in attaining the highest levels of earthly education. A few have been awarded Doctor of Philosophy degrees, while some have earned professorships. Many people have achieved in their careers, and a few have reached the highest heights of their careers in a short period. We have people who have experienced success in their marriages and families.

To go further: People have come up with astonishing inventions that have revolutionized the world. People of faith have done miracles like healing the sick and raising the dead; a good example is Peter, a disciple of Jesus. People have written books that have sold billions of copies worldwide, and some have written books that have significantly transformed lives. People have climbed the highest mountains in the world, such as Mount Everest.

Human beings have done all these marvelous things, but I know nobody who has successfully uprooted a mountain and thrown it in the sea. What does all this mean? This means that if you have faith, you will be able to do what has never been done by anyone in the world.

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 28:13 that God will make you the head and not the tail, meaning you shall be the first and not the last. This verse is backed up with the evidence of various heroes

of faith in the Bible. Enoch was the first person in the Bible/History to be translated to Heaven directly without seeing death. Mary was the first lady in the world to give birth to God (Jesus) when He came in the incarnate form. Moses was the first to drive the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

Joseph was the first Israelite to be appointed Prime Minister in Egypt. Abraham and Sarah were the first to receive a child when both their reproductive organs had died. King Josiah was the first Jew to be appointed king at eight years old. Samson was the first to receive superhuman strength, and Solomon was the first to receive superhuman wisdom.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the first to come out alive from a fiery furnace that was heated seven times. Daniel was the first to come out alive from a den filled with hungry lions. The fact that something has not happened does not mean it cannot occur. God has made everyone unique and has given each one a unique identity and purpose. If you have faith in Him, He will enable you to be the first to do what has never been done.

When earthquakes, floods or other natural disasters appear, they sweep away buildings, trees and many other things. However, none of these disasters have been able to sweep away a mountain. In the time of Noah, the flood swept everything away except the mountains.

The Bible records in Genesis 7:20 (KJV) – "Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered." As boisterous as they were, the flood waters and the winds did not sweep away the mountains. They only covered them.

No bomb created by a human being can uproot a mountain, not even a nuclear bomb. The Bible says if you have faith in God, with no doubt in your heart, your word will uproot a mountain and cast it into the sea. In other words, you can do what natural and man-made disasters have never done. Faith will make all manner of evil tremble at your feet.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

Romans 4:19-21 (KJV) – "[19] And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: [20] He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; [21] And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

Abraham's loins and Sarah's womb were both dead. Abraham did not look at his current condition. He did not worry about his old age. He focused on God's promise. God's assurance that he would have a child was enough evidence that he would indeed have that child. Even though a quarter of a century passed after God had promised him that he would have children, he did not doubt God because length of time does not affect the promises of God.

Matthew 14:25-31 (KJV) – "[25] And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. [26] And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. [27] But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. [28] And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. [29] And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, He walked on the water, to go to Jesus. [30] But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. [31] And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

"Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour. The wind is boisterous. The waves roll high, and come directly between him and the Master; and he is afraid. For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and, fixing them upon Jesus, cries, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" – The Desire of Ages, Page 381, Ellen G. White.

At first, Peter acted in faith by obeying the command of Jesus when He told him, "Come." When Peter saw the boisterous wind, he began doubting, thus losing trust in God's Word. This lack of faith caused him to start sinking. Lack of faith makes one sink in life. It leads to failure.

Peter didn't realize that the power to walk on water was in the Word "Come", which Jesus told him. He forgot that the ability to walk on water for the few seconds he had walked was a miracle. He didn't understand that He who had made him walk on water would make him overcome the boisterous winds.

"When trouble comes upon us, how often we are like Peter! We look upon the waves, instead of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Savior. Our footsteps slide, and the proud waters go over our souls.

Jesus did not bid Peter come to Him that he should perish; He does not call us to follow Him, and then forsake us. "Fear not," He says; "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Isaiah 43:1-3.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 382, Ellen G. White.

“Jesus read the character of His disciples. He knew how sorely their faith was to be tried. In this incident on the sea He desired to reveal to Peter his own weakness, —to show that his safety was in constant dependence upon divine power. Amid the storms of temptation he could walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he should rely upon the Saviour. It was on the point where he thought himself strong that Peter was weak; and not until he discerned his weakness could he realize his need of dependence upon Christ. Had he learned the lesson that Jesus sought to teach him in that experience on the sea, he would not have failed when the great test came upon him.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 381, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

What are some of the things we don’t see?

God

"When we speak of faith, there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His Word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny. The Bible says that "the devils also believe and tremble"; but this is not faith. Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. And the heart that in its unrenewed state is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, now delights in its holy precepts, exclaiming with the psalmist, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97. And the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1.” - Steps to Christ, Page 63-64, Ellen G. White.

Some people are waiting to see God to believe He exists. Jesus told Thomas in John 20:29 (KJV) – “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." We will see Jesus physically until His second coming. Only those who believe will be saved, but those who choose not to believe will be destroyed.

God has filled the earth with evidence of His Word. The trees, birds, flowers, heavenly bodies and all created things are enough evidence to prove that God's Word works. We are surrounded by the evidence of God everywhere we go. It will result from our foolishness when we choose hellfire instead of eternal life.

God exists. We did not create ourselves. Therefore, we do not fully understand ourselves. We neither know the number of hairs on our heads nor the number of cells in our bodies. We do not fully understand how our bodies function, and no scientist does, for that matter. It is only God who does.

If we were self-sufficient and fully independent as we claim to be, we could control our lifespan and set it to immortality. We would never make plans that fail and be in full control of the universe. Therefore, it needs honesty and humility to accept that a higher being controls everything.

Jeremiah 13:23 (KJV) – “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?”

The Bible does not say the leopard's spots and the Ethiopian's skin cannot be changed. Instead, it says the Ethiopian has no power to change his skin, and the leopard cannot change its spots. This verse shows us how powerless we are. Until we realize how powerless we are, we can never grow. With humility, we need to yield to the will of God. If we do so, we can access the blessings God has in store for us.

The fact that we don't see God does not mean He does not exist. There are lots of things which we do not see that exist. We do not see our faces save by the help of images in mirrors and photographs, but they do exist. We do not see our internal organs, such as cells, but they exist.

X-ray scans have been made to give us images of our internal organs. Microscopes have been made to view microscopic elements, like bacteria, which are invisible to the naked eye. God gave us dominion over the earth and everything that lives on it, including the microscopic elements (Genesis 1:28). This means that they are under our control.

Therefore, inventing equipment that enables us to see things on Earth is relatively easy. God did not give us dominion over Him. He will always remain above us because He is the Creator, and we are created beings. Therefore, no matter how hard we try, no one can invent equipment that enables one to see God. The people building the tower of Babel tried to build a tower that would reach Heaven, but God rendered their labors useless.

Some scientists know that inventing equipment that enables one to see God is impossible. However, due to a lack of humility in accepting that their knowledge is limited, they preach that there is no God. Worldly education is limited. We cannot fully rely on the science of this world to prove the existence of the God who created the universe.

We cannot use the incomplete and inadequate education of this world to prove the existence of a God who arts in Heaven (Matthew 6:9). We cannot use our finite minds and thoughts to fully understand an infinite God whose thoughts are incomparable to ours because they are as high as Heaven is from earth (Isaiah 55:8-9).

We lose nothing when we believe in God and walk in His ways. Obeying God's commandments enables us to live in harmony with all creation. Therefore, faithful obedience to God will prevent us from encountering most problems. If we can be honest with ourselves, we will realize that most of our problems have resulted from our own sins. All difficulties you will ever encounter come from your own or somebody else's sin.

You may be a qualified youth facing the challenge of unemployment, you apply for a job you qualify for, but they end up not taking you because someone else has given a bribe. That sinful act of corruption by someone else has rendered your job-searching efforts futile. If you take revenge, the situation will not improve; it will only worsen.

Therefore, as a Christian, the best thing to do is to live by faith and obey God no matter the circumstances because change begins with you. Through your righteous example, some will get converted gradually but surely. Many people will be transformed, and the environment around you will be peaceful.

2 Chronicles 20:20 (KJV) – “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

Believing in God has great and endless benefits. The Bible promises that if you believe in God, you shall have a firm foundation to set you up in all aspects of your life. A solid Christian foundation will make you equipped in all life areas. It gives one wisdom to handle their social, family and career lives properly.

Believing in God has benefits for one's physical health. "Let the mind become intelligent, and the will be placed on the Lord's side, and there will be a wonderful improvement in the physical health." – Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 690.4, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

When approaching God, you must believe in His Word and His existence. Many of us go to God with hearts filled with doubt. The Bible says, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." It is a sin to approach God without faith. People will receive answers to their prayers if they fully trust God.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – “He that cometh to God must believe that He is.” When you go to God you must believe that He is loving, He is kind, He is merciful, He wants the best for you than you want for yourself, He is the great physician, He is all-powerful, He is all-knowing, He is omnipresent, He is gracious, He is faithful, He is the one and only true God and all other righteous qualities you can ever think of.

If one believes God is the only true God, they will not approach witch doctors. Some Christians worship God, but like Saul, they visit evil shrines due to impatience. It is not strange to hear regular church-going Christians saying that things to do with God take such a ‘long’ time while the Bible says the Lord is not slow concerning His promise as some men count slowness (2 Peter 3:9).

God has made it clear in Exodus 20:3 that we should not have any other gods before Him. Therefore, when we approach other sources besides God, He is not obligated to answer our prayers. Some Christians do not believe God is all-powerful. They believe God can heal small illnesses but not chronic ones. Some do not believe that God is all-knowing. Therefore, they try to deceive God in their prayers, not knowing that God can read deep into their hearts and know their true motives. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is (Hebrews 11:6)."

“There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.” – 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh Day Adventists.

God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit exist and are all part of the Godhead. When you pray, you must believe that these three members of the Godhead exist. Some people believe in God the Father but do not believe in Jesus Christ. Some believe that Jesus Christ is not God.

When talking about Jesus, John 1:1 (KJV) says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:14 (KJV) says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Jesus Christ (The Son) is a member of the Godhead who came on earth to dwell with us in the human body. Therefore, when John 1:1 says, "The Word was God," it means that Jesus Christ is God. Hebrews 1:8 (KJV) – “But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.” In Hebrews 1:8, God the Father calls Jesus Christ God, meaning Jesus is equally divine. He is God.

Many Christians believe we only have God the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not an intelligent personality. What does the Bible say? Luke 3:22 (KJV) – “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.”

In Luke 3:22, we see the concept of the Trinity. The voice from Heaven was the Father's voice. The baptized person was Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was a separate personality that descended like a dove. Matthew 28:19 (KJV) – "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost work in unison and are all part of the Godhead, but they are three distinct and intelligent personalities. Therefore, one cannot be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son alone. The Holy Ghost has to be present as well, as He was present during

the baptism of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is equally divine as God the Father and Christ the Son. Therefore, when you pray, involve them all. Pray to God the Father (Matthew 6:9) in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14) and through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).

Mark 2:28 (KJV) – "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

Jesus is the owner of the Sabbath. The Sabbath day is God's Day and not our day. Therefore, if we believe in Jesus Christ, we must keep the Sabbath as He says and on the day He says. If He says the Sabbath is the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11), let us observe the seventh day and not any other day.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. You need to have faith in the existence of God.

God's Mercy and Love

Micah 7:18 (KJV) – "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy."

God finds joy in forgiveness. As much as He hates sin, He delights in mercy. What should we do for God to forgive us? All we need to do is to ask Him for forgiveness. Many do not believe that God has forgiven them because they feel their sin is too big to be forgiven. God hates sin but loves

all human beings, and He does not want anyone to perish. Therefore, even though your sins are as red as scarlet, He will make you white as snow when you go to Him because He does not want to lose you.

“God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. Those whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit, places them in the highest positions of trust, and sends them forth into the camp of the disloyal to proclaim His boundless mercy.” – The Desire of Ages, Page 826.2, Ellen G. White.

Some people ask God for forgiveness but do not feel that they have been forgiven. Hence they think that God has not forgiven them. You do not have to feel forgiven when you ask for forgiveness. Have faith; believe that God has forgiven you because His Word says in 1 John 1:9 (KJV) – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Others are struggling with a certain sin and have decided not to ask God for forgiveness because they keep on repeating the same sin. Do not lose hope in God because God has never lost hope in you. Keep going to Him, asking Him for forgiveness and to help you overcome that sin. God is faithful; He will make you overcome it. It is an act of faith to persist in prayer.

“It is true that Satan frequently creates in the heart of the suppliant such a conflict with doubt and temptation that strong cries and tears are involuntarily forced from him; and it is also true that the penitent's sense of guilt is sometimes so great that a repentance commensurate with his sin causes him to experience an agony that finds vent in cries and groans, which the compassionate Saviour hears with pity. But Jesus does not fail to answer the silent prayer of faith. He who simply takes God at His Word, and reaches out to connect himself with the Saviour, will receive His blessing in return.” - The Signs of the Times, May 31, 1877, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 6:12 (KJV) – “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” It is unfair to ask God to forgive us when we can’t forgive others. Therefore, we need to forgive others even though it is sometimes difficult. Forgiving other people is an act of faith. When you forgive someone, pray for that person to be transformed.

“Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love cannot touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren.” – God’s Love Proclaimed, Ellen G. White.

“He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness.” – God’s Love Proclaimed, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Faith believes in God's mercy and love. Faith is forgiving others.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:7-10 (KJV) – “[7] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. [8] For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; [9] To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; [10] To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:”

“It is the Spirit's power that we need. This can do more for us in one minute than we can ever accomplish by talking.” – My Life Today, Page 47.5, Ellen G. White.

God has given each human being at least one gift. We are to use our gifts for His glory. If we use the gifts bestowed on us to further His kingdom, we shall profit from them. We shall increase our happiness and peace. Our gifts shall be increased, too, because we have shown faithfulness in little.

Therefore, God will trust us to give us much. Through the Godly use of our gifts, more people shall be blessed, and the world will be better than it currently is.

Matthew 25:24-30 (KJV) – "[24] Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: [25] And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. [26] His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: [27] Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. [28] Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. [29] For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. [30] And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Unfortunately, many of us behave like the foolish servant who buried his talent. Various people have died without using their God-given gifts or following their God-given purpose. This is because many do not know what their gifts are. The first step in finding your gift is to pray. Secondly, you can figure out which things you do best without much strain. The next step after this is to ask yourself, how best will I use this gift to bring more people to the Kingdom of God?

Pray to God to give you more opportunities to use that gift for His glory. Then the last step is faith in action; start doing. Once you embark on your purpose, your vision will keep getting bigger. I knew I was good at writing but did not know what to do with the writing gift; when I started developing myself spiritually, I got the conviction that I should start writing Christian devotional articles and posting them on social media.

I would read the Bible in the morning, meditate on it then write down my thoughts. After writing them down, I realized that it could be more profitable if I shared with them people on social media. After sharing, some people advised me to start a blog and post those articles there. That is how I ended up starting www.gettruthgetlife.com.

After starting the blog, I thought I had achieved and did not need to do more. People started inviting me to their churches to preach. Others requested me to do a Voice podcast, and others requested

me to write a book. When you use your gifts to work on your vision, the vision keeps on getting bigger.

Each and everything you do by faith opens up a new door. For example, the social media posts opened a door for me to start a blog, and the blog opened up doors for me to speak at various places, and when I speak at those places, more doors open, which keeps on opening more and more doors.

Luke 12:48 (KJV) – "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

God expects faithful use of that one gift if you have been given only one gift. If you have been given more than one gift, God expects faithful use of all the gifts He has given you. God might have given you a gift in speaking, writing, singing, poetry, and art. He expects you to use them all for His glory.

There is a reason God has given you all the gifts He has given you. He has not given you all those gifts coincidentally or accidentally. He has given them to you to use them for His glory, which in turn will benefit you. The first servant who was given five talents used all five talents to gain ten talents. He did not just use one of his talents. He used all his talents.

"The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised." – Christ Object Lessons, Page 327.1, Ellen G. White.

Many world gurus will tell you to concentrate on one thing and leave the rest. Those gurus are not the ones who have given you all those gifts. It is God who has made you multi-talented, and He has made you like that for a reason. If you have a problem in balancing, ask God to guide you on how to balance.

Some people have excelled in sports and academics simultaneously. Most of those people live well-balanced lives. Robert Kelly was the first and probably the only popular musician to play professional basketball. Not only is he a singer, but he is also a multi-instrumentalist and can play around seven instruments.

“The barren tree receives the rain and the sunshine and the gardener's care. It draws nourishment from the soil. But its unproductive boughs only darken the ground, so that fruit-bearing plants cannot flourish in its shadow. So God's gifts, lavished on you, convey no blessing to the world. You are robbing others of privileges that, but for you, might be theirs.” – Christ Object Lessons, Page 217.1, Ellen G. White.

Do not be like the barren tree. When God gives you many gifts, use them all. David in the Bible was a king, a musician, a poet, and an author. Before he became king, he was a shepherd. Luke was a doctor, a historian and an author of the book of Luke and Acts.

Paul, who wrote almost half of the books of the New Testament, was a tent maker. Samuel was a prophet, priest and judge. God has not called all of us to be pastors. However, He has called us to serve Him in our various fields. Some people tell me to study for a degree in theology probably because they may have noticed my passion for Bible study.

I believe you don't have to have a theology degree to understand the Bible. If you have passion and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance when you are studying, He will guide you to the entire truth (John 16:13). Secondly, being a pastor or prophet does not mean you cannot do other things.

Not everyone who wrote the Bible was a prophet or priest. People with various occupations wrote the Bible. As long as you do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), using the gifts God has given you, you are on the right track. There is no problem if a pastor opens up a legal business that is abiding with all the commandments of God.

Revelation 5:10 (KJV) – “And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Christ has made us priests and kings, not priests only or kings only. He has made us both priests and kings. Samuel was a prophet, priest and judge. In those days, no kings existed in Israel, so

judges would take the place of kings. Therefore, concluding that he was a prophet, priest, judge and king is okay.

So, we should not judge pastors when they open up businesses because God might have given them the business idea. If a pastor has a singing talent, and we tell him that all he has to do is to be a pastor, the question is, what should he do with his singing talent if all he should do is preach? He can preach and sing gospel songs too. The problem comes when he concentrates more on worldly things than the gospel, and that does not apply to pastors only. It applies to us all.

“The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.” – Christ Object Lessons, Page 328.1, Ellen G. White.

The use of the gifts needs to be directed by the Holy Spirit because the Holy Ghost gives them to us. Not for a single moment should we act with pride when using our gifts. Humility should prevail right from the motives to the actions. We should never deviate from the purpose of glorifying God. When we have fallen slightly off the track, we should quickly ask God for forgiveness.

We must yield to the Holy Spirit's influence on everything we do. When preaching a sermon, our minds need to stay focused on Christ. Not a single moment should we think of our glory. We should not let our heads inflate when someone compliments us for something righteous, we have done.

We are to direct all attention to Christ and, as much as possible, refrain from drawing attention to ourselves. When we lift Christ, we shall have a heavenly influence, and Christ will reward us by lifting us. However, we should not focus on the rewards or awards but on representing Jesus in the best possible way.

“It is not because of any restriction on God's part that the riches of His grace do not flow to men. His gift is godlike. He gave with a liberality that men do not appreciate because they do not love

to receive. If all were willing to receive, all would be filled with the Spirit.... We are too easily satisfied with a ripple on the surface, when it is our privilege to expect the deep moving of the Spirit of God." – The Review and Herald, June 10, 1902, Ellen G. White.

"With the reception of this gift, all other gifts would be ours; for we are to have this gift according to the plentitude of the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive. Then let us not be satisfied with only a little of this blessing, only that amount which will keep us from the slumber of death, but let us diligently seek for the abundance of the grace of God." – The Review and Herald, March 29, 1892, Ellen G. White.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We should trust in God and believe He has given us at least one gift, even though we do not know it. By faith, we should ask God to show us what our gift is and how to use it for His glory.

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) – "[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

The original Greek text of Galatians 5:22, is "the fruit of the Spirit" (singular), not "fruits." The Greek word used here is "καρπός" (karpos), which is singular and typically translated as "fruit."

“If we have the love of Christ in our souls, it will be a natural consequence for us to have all the other graces—joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.... When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, ... His presence will be felt.” – My Life Today, Page 50.5, Ellen G. White.

This singular term suggests that the qualities listed—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—are aspects of one unified "fruit" produced by the Spirit within believers, rather than separate "fruits." This implies a holistic, unified result of the Spirit’s work in a person’s life, where all these attributes grow and complement each other rather than exist as independent traits.

By describing it as a single "fruit," Paul emphasizes that the Spirit's work is cohesive and that these qualities are interconnected, arising from the same source and intended to be developed together.

“Your compassionate Redeemer is watching you in love and sympathy, ready to hear your prayers and render you the assistance which you need in your lifework. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christian character..... They are the Christian's crown and shield.” – Child Guidance, Page 173.1, Ellen G. White.

The Character of a genuine Christian is seen when he has the fruit of the spirit. These nine qualities in the fruit of the Spirit show the Holy Spirit's work in a person. If a man or woman surrenders himself or herself totally to Christ, the Holy Spirit begins working in that person. If they yield to the direction and instruction of the Holy Spirit, they gradually yet surely begin developing these attributes such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness and temperance.

A Christian is incomplete if they lack the fruit of the spirit. If you are intemperate, ask God to give you temperance, for it is His will that you exercise self-control in all things. If you are impatient, ask God to instill in your heart patience.

Many shy off from asking God to give them patience because they think that if they ask God to give them patience, God will give them a plethora of situations that require them to be patient. Allow God to work in you by whatever means He chooses to. It is better for Him to give you challenging situations that will grow this fruit in you than encountering consequences that result from lacking any of these facets of the Spirit's fruit.

For example, many diseases, such as cancer, can result from eating an unhealthy diet. Eating unhealthily usually comes due to a lack of temperance. Many have faced consequences that have come because of a lack of humility; one such consequence is stagnation because one needs to be meek and have the heart of a little child for them to grow. Some people have committed suicide due to impatience because they are facing unemployment or other financial challenges. The school of God is not meant to harm you but to refine you.

“The apostle's earnest words of entreaty were not fruitless. The Holy Spirit wrought with mighty power, and many whose feet had wandered into strange paths, returned to their former faith in the gospel. Henceforth they were steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free..... The name of God was glorified, and many were added to the number of believers throughout that region.” – Acts of the Apostles, Page 388.3, Ellen G. White.

People will be converted not by the sermons we preach but by the example of our lives. We cannot preach love and hate our neighbor. Christianity would be more widespread and have a greater influence if we practiced what we preach. As we use our gifts to bring more people to Christ, our content of Character needs to gravitate more people to Christ too. How can we preach victory over sin when our lives are the quintessence of captivity in sin?

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. By faith, let us yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to develop His fruit in us. If we do that, we will be a great blessing to the world.

God's Promises and Blessings

Genesis 12:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

God's promises and blessings are conditional and unconditional. For example, the death of Jesus on the cross was unconditional. Some of His blessings are conditional, for example, the blessings in Deuteronomy 28:1-13. Deuteronomy 28:1 (KJV) – "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth." If you fulfil the condition of obeying His commandments, you will access those blessings listed in Deuteronomy 28:1-13.

"There is no limit to the good you may do. If you make the Word of God the rule of your life, and govern your actions by its precepts, making all your purposes and exertions in the fulfilling of your duty a blessing and not a curse to others, success will crown your efforts. You have placed yourself in connection with God; you have become a channel of light to others. You are honored by becoming colaborers with Jesus; and no higher honor can you receive than the blessed benediction from the lips of the Saviour: "Well done, good and faithful servant."" – My Life Today, Page 54.5, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:8 (KJV) – "By faith, Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and he went out." For Abraham to inherit that place, he had to fulfill the condition of going to where God had sent him. God did not tell Abraham where He was going; he just told him to get out of his country, and if he did that, He would bless him and bless those who bless him.

"Abraham could not explain the leadings of Providence; he had not realized his expectations; but he held fast the promise, "I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing." With earnest prayer he considered how to preserve the life of his people and his flocks, but he would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's Word. To escape the famine he went down into Egypt. He did not forsake Canaan, or in his extremity turn back to the Chaldean land from which he came, where there was no scarcity of bread; but he sought a temporary refuge as near as possible to the Land of Promise, intending shortly to return where God had placed him." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 129, Ellen G. White.

When God tells you to do something, He promises that He will bless you. He rarely gives you complete information about how He intends to bless you once you fulfil that requirement because

He wants you to move by faith. If He tells you of the blessings, He intends to give you; you will not obey Him by faith. You will obey Him because of the rewards.

We should be prompt in obeying God's voice and refrain from questioning Him. Do not be afraid when God sends you on a mission to an unfamiliar land to minister to unfamiliar people. Let not worry and anxiety becloud your mind. Trust in God and believe in His providence and power to make that mission successful.

"Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His Word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," with which "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared." 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 127, Ellen G. White.

Many wait to hear a loud voice from Heaven to be assured that God is speaking. Some are waiting for God to speak to them through visions and dreams. God does that sometimes, but not always. He has given us the Bible, complete with the Old and New Testaments. He has made it widely available and quite affordable. If you cannot afford a physical copy, you can access the online ones.

God has sent missionaries to give people Bibles and spread the gospel in remote areas without internet and electricity. Despite that, God speaks through people. However, it would be difficult to discern God's voice if you are unfamiliar with His Word. When someone calls you to do something Godly or to serve in the church, it is the voice of God speaking through that person. Therefore, do not give excuses for why you cannot do certain work you are called to do. Like Nike's brand slogan, "Just do it."

“Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequences of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.” - Gospel Workers, Page 260, Ellen G. White.

God desperately wants to bless you. He wants to bless you more than you want, but He cannot bless you when you don't allow Him to. He needs you to allow Him to give you whatever He wants. The best way to allow Him is to have faith and to put your faith into action.

God's blessings are present in this life and flow all the way to eternity. The blessings He will give you in this life are minimal because you have minimum time to live on this earth. However, the blessings you will acquire in eternity are endless, for you will enjoy them in your endless lifespan as you eat from the Tree of Life.

“To abide in faith is to put aside feeling and selfish desires, to walk humbly with the Lord, to appropriate His promises, and apply them to all occasions, believing that God will work out His own plans and purposes in your heart and life.” - Fundamentals of Christian Education, Page 341-342, Ellen G. White.

The carnal mind is always subject to selfish desires. Humans are naturally selfish, always wanting the best for themselves alone. We want to shine more than our neighbours and be ahead of our friends. Unfortunately, selfishness creates scarcity for a person with a selfish heart and motive. Selfishness can make you lose friends and lose important connections. It can close doors that were once opened and block entrances that God had meant for you to walk through freely.

In Matthew 25:29 (KJV), the Bible says, "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” The secret to abundance is generosity, and the path to scarcity is withholding.

God expects us to be faithful stewards in everything that He has given us. When the first servant showed faithful stewardship in his five talents, the master was pleased with him, for he acted by faith. When the third servant, who was given one talent, failed to show faithful stewardship, the

master was angry with him. The master took that one talent he had given him and gave it to the first servant.

Many ask, "Why do the rich keep getting richer while the poor keep getting poorer?" An answer to this question has often been that the rich are evil and corrupt, always coming up with devices to oppress the poor, making themselves rich. This notion is not always true. People who are rich in any aspect of life, be it materially or spiritually, are rich because they have enriched others.

Those who have become wealthy through dubious means are not rich because wealth cannot be created by being a curse to someone else. The person who opens a genuine business can get money and boost his network simultaneously. The one who cons or robs someone may get money but get a bad reputation, thus losing networks. The greed they have in their heart for instant gratification will make them lose future connections which would have been more valuable.

Corrupt politicians who dwindle the country's resources risk being robbed or constantly begged because they have failed to create jobs. In the long run, they lose all the money they had stolen. The man who opens up a retail store to sell consumer goods benefits people by selling essential commodities they need daily.

The person who sells a business-to-business service enriches people by smoothening the other party's business operations and boosting their profits. If you want abundance in time, always give God your time. If you want abundance in money, use your money to the glory of God. If you want abundance in everything in life, give your whole life to God. Nothing given to God is lost.

“Abraham continued to journey southward, and again his faith was tested. The heavens withheld their rain, the brooks ceased to flow in the valleys, and the grass withered on the plains. The flocks and herds found no pasture, and starvation threatened the whole encampment. Did not the patriarch now question the leadings of Providence? Did he not look back with longing to the plenty of the Chaldean plains? All were eagerly watching to see what Abraham would do, as trouble after trouble came upon him. So long as his confidence appeared unshaken, they felt that there was hope; they were assured that God was his Friend, and that He was still guiding him.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 129, Ellen G. White.

Faith should be the key to your confidence and not the physical or material providences. Even if you are broke and you have no money in your pocket, do not think of yourself as poor because, as

a child of God, you can never be poor. Carry yourself confidently because you are lying in the arms of the One who owns the universe.

Do not be afraid of anything in this world because you are abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, the ultimate protection. When God calls you to lead, trust in Him to make your leadership a success and do not worry about the minimal resources that you may have. Acts 17:28 (KJV) – "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

"Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency." – Gospel Workers, Page 259, Ellen G. White.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)" 2 Corinthians 1:20 (KJV) – "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to fully believe in you. Help me to trust in your mercy and love. Reveal to me the gifts of the Holy Spirit that you have placed in me and instill in me the fruit of the Holy

Spirit too. Make me cling tightly to your promises because you always do what you say. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Daily Reflection and Prayer Journal

Goal: Strengthen belief in God, His mercy, and love, while nurturing the fruit of the Spirit, developing spiritual gifts, and holding onto His promises.

Steps:

1. **Set Aside Quiet Time Daily** (15-20 minutes): Begin with a moment of silence, inviting God's presence. Acknowledge His love, mercy, and guidance in your life.
2. **Gratitude Reflection**: Write down three things you're grateful for, specifically focusing on ways you've seen God's mercy, love, and provision in your life. Reflect on how these experiences reveal His character and how deeply He cares for you.
3. **Focus on the Fruit of the Spirit**: Each week, choose one of the nine qualities of the fruit of the Spirit (e.g., love, joy, peace, etc.) to focus on. For example, if focusing on "peace," pray for situations or areas in your life where you need peace and ask the Holy Spirit to grow this fruit in you. Throughout the day, consciously practice this quality, looking for moments to express it in small actions.
4. **Develop Spiritual Gifts**: Identify a specific spiritual gift you feel called to develop (e.g., encouragement, teaching, service). Ask God to reveal opportunities to use and strengthen this gift in the lives of those around you. For example, if you feel called to encourage others, make it a point to lift someone's spirit each day, whether through a kind message, prayer, or small act of service.
5. **Scripture for Promises**: Select a scripture promise each week (e.g., Philippians 4:19, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus"). Write it down and meditate on it, asking God to help you internalize and stand firmly on this promise. When challenges arise, recall this verse and pray it back to God as a reminder of His faithfulness.

6. **Pray and Reflect on God's Character**: Close your time with a prayer that acknowledges God's mercy, love, and greatness. Thank Him for the work He's doing in you, ask Him to help you grow in the fruit of the Spirit, and reaffirm your trust in His promises.
7. **End-of-Week Reflection**: On the last day of each week, reflect on how practicing the fruit of the Spirit, the chosen spiritual gift, and the promise impacted your faith. Write down any moments where you felt closer to God or saw Him working through you. Thank Him for these experiences.

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CHAPTER 3

A GOOD REPUTATION IS OBTAINED BY FAITH

Faith makes legends and heroes,

Faith makes ordinary people stand out,

Faith makes huge Dollars and Euros,

Total faith in God wins, have no doubt.

By faith the elders obtained a good report,

Elders like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Lot,

Believing before they saw, consistency to the last dot,

In the fields of uncertainty, a winning battle they fought.

Moving a mountain, impossible it seems,

Faith in God can move it, Faith can make true your highest dreams,

Moving together in faith, making winning teams,

By faith, your path will shine brighter than the brightest beams.

Out of your comfort zone, into the battlefield,

Trumpets ablaze, no fear only follow God's lead,

His work is effortless if to His control you yield,

A blessed destination and protection for faith is your shield.

Hebrews 11:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. [2] For by it the elders obtained a good report."

"By faith, the elders obtained a good report (Hebrews 11:2)." A good reputation is obtained by faith. You can have all the skills and talents in the world but if you do not have faith, you will not get a good report. The Bible says in Mark 11:23 (KJV) – "For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."

Moving a mountain is an impossible task if you rely on human strength. The Bible does not say, if you have this skill or this talent or this amount of physical strength you will move a mountain. Instead, it says, if you have faith, you will not only move a mountain with your words but also command it to be thrown into the sea. Faith does the unthinkable. Faith does the impossible. Faith goes beyond human skill, talent, and power. Therefore, faith will enable you to obtain a great reputation because if you apply it, you will do things that nobody has ever done.

Myron Golden defines faith as a positive belief towards, a well-grounded expectation towards the unseen righteous, good, and noble things. The negative belief is known as doubt. "Everybody who has ever gotten a good reputation, they have gotten it by faith. They did it by believing in something they could not see. They did it by focusing on the invisible." – Myron Golden. Jacob in the Bible was more blessed than Esau because he focused on the invisible while Esau focused on the visible.

I have seen and heard of many people who have forfeited future greatness and wealth because of instant gratification. Most of the population of people in the world are not much different from Esau. They want immediate things and never mind future things. God has given many people lucrative business ideas but because of the security and comfortability their job offers, they have died without working on those ideas. Starting and running a business involves weighty risks and if you do not have faith, you cannot operate it successfully. Gina Din Kariuki, a Kenyan public relations expert, said she started her public relations firm with lots of prayers and faith. Many are afraid to apply faith because faith may require you to get out of your comfort zone.

Genesis 12:1 (KJV) – "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."

In other words, God was telling Abraham (who was once called Abram) to get out of his comfort zone. There is great comfort outside your comfort zone if it is God who has commanded you to leave your comfort zone. God does not have to speak to you loudly like He did to Abram. He may talk to you through someone, through your thoughts and often through His Word. You need to be well versed with the Word of God to discern God's voice.

God may allow you to tarmac and face unemployment with your lofty qualifications so that you can work on the business idea He has given you. Therefore, the best thing to do, as you are moving from office to office dropping your Curriculum Vitae (C.V.), is to work on your business idea or anything that is in line with your purpose. It would be a waste of time when all you have done in three years of unemployment is drop your C.V. and apply for jobs.

Apply for as many jobs as you can, if you are looking for a job, but at the same time make sure you are doing something to add value to the world. God in His love has allowed some people to lose their jobs so that they can work on their business ideas. If they obey God's call and move with faith, they will reap greater rewards from their businesses than they would have from their jobs.

Pastor Mark Finley's father lost his job when he heard the Sabbath message and chose not to work on Sabbath. He began looking for employment, but he could not find any because of stating his Sabbath beliefs. One time, he got a job from a Jewish company when he stated his Sabbath beliefs because Jews strongly believe in the Sabbath. He was employed by a Jewish firm and saved money to start his own company similar to the one he was working in. The company became so successful that it ended up buying the Jewish company.

Acting by faith gives one a good reputation. The Bible says in Proverbs 22:1 (KJV) – "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." A good name is better than riches because a good name can bring riches, but riches may not always give one a good name. Total trust in God assures one of greatness. All the Biblical writers are great. Some of them might have not been rich but they are great because God used them as instruments to minister to thousands of generations after they died. Faith in God gives one a good name.

Faith is laying hold of the invisible as if it is visible. When talking about Elon Musk, Myron Golden says, "Elon Musk believed in Tesla before Tesla was Tesla. He forced us to see in the physical

realm what he saw in the invisible realm." Anything good in this world that has ever been started, began as an idea. It took a step of faith to take action to work on that idea and make it a reality.

Ton Wenhong obtained a good reputation through Alibaba company when she joined Alibaba as a receptionist. When Jack Ma was allocating company shares, he gave Tong 0.2% shares and promised her that it will be worth 100 million USD when Alibaba goes public. Tong waited for years for Alibaba to become a public company, but it never did for more than 10 years. In September 2014 when Alibaba was listed on the New York Stock exchange, it was worth 245.7 billion US Dollars.

Tong became a millionaire with 320 million dollars. She strongly held on to the invisible and thus earned a good reputation. I believe there are people who despised those shares when Jack Ma gave them and left the company to work in places where they were promised a higher salary. Such people like Esau ended up regretting it, but unfortunately, there is nothing they could do about the situation.

Matthew 13:41-42 (KJV) – "[41] The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; [42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

God has given every man an opportunity to go to Him. Some of them, He has bid them countless times to believe in Him so that they will inherit eternal life. Unfortunately, some have chosen to have a hard heart. On the day of judgment, those who showed lack of faith in God and had the doors of probation close for them, will regret. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth because their lack of faith will make them lose eternity and the tremendous experience that comes with it.

Some people in the Bible who obtained a good reputation:

Enoch

Hebrews 11:5 (KJV) – "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

“Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast, unwavering servant of the Lord.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 85.1, Ellen G. White.

“His heart was in harmony with God's will; for “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Amos 3:3. And this holy walk was continued for three hundred years. There are few Christians who would not be far more earnest and devoted if they knew that they had but a short time to live, or that the coming of Christ was about to take place. But Enoch's faith waxed the stronger, his love became more ardent, with the lapse of centuries.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 85.2, Ellen G. White.

“Enoch was a man of strong and highly cultivated mind and extensive knowledge; he was honored with special revelations from God; yet being in constant communion with Heaven, with a sense of the divine greatness and perfection ever before him, he was one of the humblest of men. The closer the connection with God, the deeper was the sense of his own weakness and imperfection.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 85.3, Ellen G. White.

“Distressed by the increasing wickedness of the ungodly, and fearing that their infidelity might lessen his reverence for God, Enoch avoided constant association with them, and spent much time in solitude, giving himself to meditation and prayer. Thus he waited before the Lord, seeking a clearer knowledge of His will, that he might perform it. To him prayer was as the breath of the soul; he lived in the very atmosphere of heaven.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 85.4, Ellen G. White.

Enoch obtained a good reputation by walking with God all the days of his life. God translated him to heaven directly without allowing him to see death.

Noah

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Hebrews 11:7. While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat on dry ground, multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher. Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 95.1, Ellen G. White.

“Many at first appeared to receive the warning; yet they did not turn to God with true repentance. They were unwilling to renounce their sins. During the time that elapsed before the coming of the Flood, their faith was tested, and they failed to endure the trial. Overcome by the prevailing unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message. Some were deeply convicted, and would have heeded the words of warning; but there were so many to jest and ridicule, that they partook of the same spirit, resisted the invitations of mercy, and were soon among the boldest and most defiant scoffers; for none are so reckless and go to such lengths in sin as do those who have once had light, but have resisted the convicting Spirit of God.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 95.2, Ellen G. White.

By faith Noah acted quickly and built an ark as God had commanded him. Some of us have lost the greatest blessings because of choosing to delay. Esau made a sweet meal for his father. Not only did he make a sweet meal, but he also made exactly what his father wanted. His father wanted an animal from the wild where Esau used to go to hunt.

Jacob was never a hunter; he used to stay at home. Jacob took the nearest animal from home and made meat for his father. What Jacob gave his father was not the choiciest meat, it was not exactly

what his father wanted but he got all the blessings. The timing factor favored him. As much as Isaac had asked for meat from the wild, he could not stay hungry for long.

When you present a hungry person with food, he barely cares how that food is made. Sometimes he begins eating without praying even if he is a pastor. It is when he reaches in the middle of eating that is when he says, "we forgot to pray." Many businessmen and women miss out on opportunities because they want to present the best product in the market.

Some customers are in a hurry and in need of a product on that line, and they want whatever product is ready. So, they take the product that is available, not caring much about the quality. Faith in God is acting fast and seizing every possible opportunity before it touches the ground. Noah obtained a good reputation by building an ark which saved him and his family from the flood.

Abraham

Hebrews 11:8-10 (KJV) – "[8] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. [9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: [10] For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

"The message of God came to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred." = Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 126.1, Ellen G. White.

""By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8. Abraham's

unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Verse 1. Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. “By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” Hebrews 11:9, R.V.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 126.2, Ellen G. White.

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God has spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 126.3, Ellen G. White.

Abraham did many faithful actions. He went to the land that God had told him to go to even before God gave him that land for an inheritance. He obtained a good reputation by becoming so rich materially (Genesis 13:2) and by being the father of many nations. We also read about him today and we have nicknamed him, “the father of faith.”

Despite his old age and Sarah’s barrenness, Abraham believed God’s promise that he would have a son and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or as the sand by the seashore (Genesis 15:6). God gave him a son not only in old age but when his loins and Sarah’s womb were dead. God can do anything for you. Therefore, keep His commandments, including the Sabbath.

Abraham faithfully obeyed God’s command to circumcise every male in his household as a sign of the covenant between God and his descendants (Genesis 17:23). They had never heard of circumcision. Abraham did not argue with God, telling Him that he has never heard of such a thing. Instead, he obeyed.

“Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants in all succeeding ages. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God. During

that three days' journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised; and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men. He might have pleaded that age should excuse him from obedience. But the patriarch did not take refuge in any of these excuses. Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 153.3, Ellen G. White.

"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God." James 2:23. And Paul says, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Galatians 3:7. But Abraham's faith was made manifest by his works. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" James 2:21, 22. There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, "Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law." But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. Said Christ to the unbelieving Jews, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8:39. And concerning the father of the faithful the Lord declares, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. Says the apostle James, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17. And John, who dwells so fully upon love, tells us, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." 1 John 5:3." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 153.4, Ellen G. White.

In the ultimate test of faith, Abraham was willing to obey God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac, trusting that God would raise him from the dead if necessary (Hebrews 11:17). Even though he did not do it, God counted it done because of his faith-filled motive. God recognizes your inner righteous motives even when you do not get the opportunity to do them, and He counts it as if you have already done it. He goes ahead and gives you the blessing of that motive even if you did not do it.

"When, through faith in Jesus Christ, man does according to the very best of his ability, and seeks to keep the way of the Lord by obedience to the Ten Commandments, the perfection of Christ is

imputed to cover the transgression of the repentant and obedient soul." - Fundamentals of Christian Education, Page 135, Ellen G. White.

Abraham also demonstrated faith in God's justice and mercy by interceding on behalf of Sodom, asking God to spare the city if righteous people could be found there (Genesis 18:23). Abraham would have used that opportunity to laugh at his nephew Lot because Lot had chosen the best and most fertile land for himself. He did not do that. Instead, he went out of his way to intercede with God, bargaining with God to spare the sinful city. Abraham did many actions that portrayed faith in God.

"Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," with which "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared." 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 126.4, Ellen G. White.

By faith Abraham obtained a good reputation.

Isaac

Genesis 26:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. [2] And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: [3] Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto

thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; [4] And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"

Genesis 26:12-16 (KJV) – "[12] Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. [13] And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: [14] For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. [15] For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. [16] And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we."

Isaac sowed in the land that had famine, and he received a hundredfold from that land in that time of famine. Clearly, it was not his sowing that brought the increase, it was God who brought the increase. God is responsible for your profits. Isaac became great in that land as he had possession of flocks, herds, and numerous servants. He was great to the point that the Philistines envied him. They could not bear him; they had to chase him away. We can see here that Isaac obtained a good report in the eyes of unbelievers because of his faith in the living God.

Isaac did many other amazing things that showed he had faith in God which made him to obtain a good reputation. Isaac willingly submitted to his father Abraham when he was to be offered as a sacrifice. Although the Bible focuses more on Abraham's faith, Isaac's submission also reflects his trust in God (Genesis 22:9).

Isaac's relationship with his father reflects that of Jesus with his mother. When people had no wine, Jesus' mother told them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it (John 2:5)." Jesus' mother had total trust in Jesus. She gave birth to him and watched him grow. There might have been many things that Jesus told his parents, and they refused to do it, only to realize later that Jesus was right.

In the case of Abraham and Isaac, Isaac had absolute trust in his father as he had witnessed his faithful walk with God. His respect for his father caused him to be willing to be sacrificed because he believed that it was God's command. The best way that parents can use to advise their children is to live the life that they advise their children to live.

Some parents do some evil things secretly and they advise their children to do the righteous thing. The parent thinks that because the child has never seen them do those evil things, they will surely

obey. Someone might not have seen you doing something evil. However, when you give advice that you do not practice, that advice does not come with authority because it does not come from a point of conviction.

Many sermons are boring because they do not come from a point of conviction no matter the impressive, convincing and intellectual language the preacher uses. Isaac saw how his dad lived and was willing to obey Him in everything even when it meant getting killed.

When Isaac's wife Rebekah was barren, Isaac prayed to the Lord on her behalf, showing his faith in God's power to grant them children. God answered his prayer, and Rebekah conceived twins (Genesis 25:21). Isaac did not blame his wife for not giving him children. He did not rush to marry another wife. He did not treat his wife with contempt for not having children. Instead, he prayed for his wife.

When we are faced with trouble, the last thing most of us do is pray. We do everything that is possible, sometimes evil to try to get that thing. Isaac obtained a good reputation when he prayed for his household because God brought blessings to that household following Isaac's prayers.

Isaac demonstrated his faith in God's provision and promises by reopening the wells that his father Abraham had dug, which the Philistines had brought to a halt. This action showed his commitment to maintain and continue the legacy of God's blessings. No matter how much property you own, it is noble to take care of your parents' property even though sometimes it might be difficult to manage. This is to ensure that nothing goes to waste. Manage them and make them better than they were before. Isaac obtained a good reputation by doing these faithful actions.

When faced with conflict over water rights, Isaac chose the path of peace by moving to different locations rather than engaging in strife. This act of faith showed his trust in God's ability to provide for him regardless of opposition (Genesis 26:22). This is the epitome of the common phrase, "like father, like son." Isaac did with others the same way that his father did with Lot. Isaac moved to different locations instead of engaging in strife. Abraham allowed Lot to choose first despite being Lot's senior in everything. Through their faithful actions, Abraham and Isaac earned good reputations.

Isaac faithfully carried out the blessing of his sons, Jacob and Esau, according to God's plan, even though Jacob received the blessing through deception. This act fulfilled God's promise that the

elder would serve the younger (Hebrews 11:20). Isaac left his children with a powerful spiritual inheritance. They were super abundantly blessed because of the blessed words that Isaac had spoken to their lives

Jacob

Genesis 25:29-34 (KJV) – "[29] And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: [30] And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. [31] And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. [32] And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? [33] And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. [34] Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

"Jacob had learned from his mother of the divine intimation that the birthright should fall to him, and he was filled with an unspeakable desire for the privileges which it would confer. It was not the possession of his father's wealth that he craved; the spiritual birthright was the object of his longing. To commune with God as did righteous Abraham, to offer the sacrifice of atonement for his family, to be the progenitor of the chosen people and of the promised Messiah, and to inherit the immortal possessions embraced in the blessings of the covenant—here were the privileges and honors that kindled his most ardent desires. His mind was ever reaching forward to the future, and seeking to grasp its unseen blessings." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 178.2, Ellen G. White.

"With secret longing he listened to all that his father told concerning the spiritual birthright; he carefully treasured what he had learned from his mother. Day and night the subject occupied his thoughts, until it became the absorbing interest of his life. But while he thus esteemed eternal above temporal blessings, Jacob had not an experimental knowledge of the God whom he revered. His heart had not been renewed by divine grace. He believed that the promise concerning himself could not be fulfilled so long as Esau retained the rights of the first-born, and he constantly studied to devise some way whereby he might secure the blessing which his brother held so lightly, but which was so precious to himself." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 178.3, Ellen G. White.

“When Esau, coming home one day faint and weary from the chase, asked for the food that Jacob was preparing, the latter, with whom one thought was ever uppermost, seized upon his advantage, and offered to satisfy his brother's hunger at the price of the birthright. “Behold, I am at the point to die,” cried the reckless, self-indulgent hunter, “and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” And for a dish of red pottage he parted with his birthright, and confirmed the transaction by an oath. A short time at most would have secured him food in his father's tents, but to satisfy the desire of the moment he carelessly bartered the glorious heritage that God Himself had promised to his fathers. His whole interest was in the present. He was ready to sacrifice the heavenly to the earthly, to exchange a future good for a momentary indulgence.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 179.1, Ellen G. White.

Many people believe that hard work brings success. Hard work is important when it is intertwined with faith in God. Some people choose to do things the hard and tiring way because it makes them feel smarter. Esau did more tiring work than Jacob as he spent long hours in the field hunting for animals. Jacob did less tiring work as he was always at home helping with the home duties.

From the story we can see that Jacob esteemed spiritual things while Esau esteemed physical things. Esau saw no need for a birthright and exchanged his birthright for a plate of food. “Behold, I am at the point to die.” The extremity that Esau faced made him sell his birthright to Jacob. Jacob showed more faith in God as he understood the value of the birthright. He bought from Esau that which was priceless in exchange for that which had a price tag. By faith, Jacob obtained a good reputation through his esteeming of spiritual things above material things.

Jacob received a vision of a stairway to heaven, where God renewed His promises to bless him and his descendants. Jacob responded in faith, acknowledging God's presence and promising to serve Him (Genesis 28:20). Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night, refusing to let go until he received a blessing. This act demonstrated his persistence in faith despite the struggles (Genesis 32:28).

After returning to Bethel, Jacob faithfully built an altar to God, acknowledging Him as his protector and the one who guided him throughout his journey. This act of worship showed his devotion and gratitude to God for His faithfulness (Genesis 35:7).

Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, placing them into the inheritance of God's covenant promises. He crossed his hands, placing the greater blessing on the younger son, Ephraim, showing faith in God's plan beyond natural birth order (Hebrews 11:21).

Joseph

Genesis 41:41-45 (KJV) – "41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

"He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom." Psalm 105:21, 22. From the dungeon Joseph was exalted to be ruler over all the land of Egypt. It was a position of high honor, yet it was beset with difficulty and peril. One cannot stand upon a lofty height without danger. As the tempest leaves unharmed the lowly flower of the valley, while it uproots the stately tree upon the mountaintop, so those who have maintained their integrity in humble life may be dragged down to the pit by the temptations that assail worldly success and honor. But Joseph's character bore the test alike of adversity and prosperity. The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner's cell. He was still a stranger in a heathen land, separated from his kindred, the worshipers of God; but he fully believed that the divine hand had directed his steps, and in constant reliance upon God he faithfully discharged the duties of his position. Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God; and though they adhered to their idolatry, they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.1, Ellen G. White.

“How was Joseph enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom?—In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator's will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Job 28:28.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.2, Ellen G. White.

“There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts. By adherence to principle in the transactions of ordinary life, the mind becomes accustomed to hold the claims of duty above those of pleasure and inclination. Minds thus disciplined are not wavering between right and wrong, like the reed trembling in the wind; they are loyal to duty because they have trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth. By faithfulness in that which is least they acquire strength to be faithful in greater matters.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.3, Ellen G. White.

Joseph was faithful in his father’s house. His brothers were envious of him; therefore, they sold him into slavery. Being sold into slavery might have seemed like a demotion, but it was a promotion for him. He went to Potiphar’s house and Potiphar esteemed him above all the other servants in his house because he brought prosperity to Potiphar’s house and Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:1-2).

Potiphar’s wife made a false accusation on Joseph and Joseph was thrown in prison for thirteen years. Through God’s help and guidance, while in prison he continued using his gift of dream interpretation which later resulted in Pharaoh exalting him to be the highest person in Egypt, second to him. Joseph obtained a good reputation by faith.

Moses

Hebrews 11:24-27 (KJV) – "[24] By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. [27] By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

""By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Hebrews 11:24-26. Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."" - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 245.4, Ellen G. white.

"Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison. The magnificent palace of Pharaoh and the monarch's throne were held out as an inducement to Moses; but he knew that the sinful pleasures that make men forget God were in its lordly courts. He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch's crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer. This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 246.1, Ellen G. White.

When Moses had matured in faith, he refused to be called a prince. Instead, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. By faith, he understood that the gifts of God are eternal whereas the gifts of this world are temporary. He chose the most eternal gifts by choosing to be on God's side. He esteemed the reproach of Christ to be of a greater value than the treasures in Egypt.

When I went to Egypt, I took some photos of the jewelry stores and posted them on my social media and my friends started asking me to buy them jewelry. Moses esteemed God higher than the most expensive jewelries from Egypt. He forsook the privilege of being an earthly prince to suffer with the Israelites in the wilderness. Such actions of faith made Moses get a great reputation.

Rahab

Hebrews 11:31 (KJV) – "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

Rahab was a harlot who did one righteous act that is recorded in the Bible. She received the spies with peace and helped hide them. What caused Rahab to do that? Joshua 2:9-11 (KJV) - "[9] And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. [10] For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. [11] And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.'"

Rahab did not know much about God as many Christians do. She might have only known the things which she narrated to the spies in Joshua 2:9-11. However, these events caused her to fear God greatly and made her acknowledge that the Lord in heaven is the true God. The action she took of hiding the spies was out of the fear of the Lord. She asked the spies for a favor. The favor she asked was to have her and her house saved from the destruction that was going to come.

Rahab asked for that favor because she believed that God could do anything and she believed in the Word of the Lord that surely, He is going to destroy that city. Rahab obtained a good reputation, and her story was written by the writer of Hebrews who wrote the book of Hebrews many years later after her death. That alone shows that Rahab obtained a good reputation by faith.

Job

Job 2:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. [10] But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Job 42:10 (KJV) – "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

"According to his faith, so was it unto Job. "When He hath tried me," he said, "I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10. So it came to pass. By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was. And "the Lord turned the captivity of Job: ... also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.... So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." Job 42:10-12." - Education, Page 156.5, Ellen G. White.

God turned the captivity of Job when Job prayed for his friends and gave Job twice as much as he had before. Job obtained a good reputation through faith. Imagine having the capacity to pray for your friends when you are facing the direst circumstances.

Many people will wait for their problems to end before they help someone else. Most Christians will wait for God to answer their prayers before they pray for someone else. Job prayed for his friends when he hardly had the capacity to pray. By faith, he worshipped God in all seasons, both the good and the bad. His faith caused him to obtain a good reputation.

Daniel

Daniel 2:46-48 (KJV) – "[46] Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. [47] The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. [48] Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon."

Through God's help, Daniel interpreted the king's dream truthfully and accurately. He did not tell the king all the pleasing words that the king would have wanted to hear. Someone else might have been afraid to tell the king the truth. So, they would have altered the truth to please the king. They would have told Nebuchadnezzar that his mighty kingdom would last forever to make him happy but that was not the truth.

By faith, Daniel obtained a good reputation in the eyes of the king. One of the most powerful kings this world has ever had made Daniel a great man in his kingdom and gave him many great gifts. Nebuchadnezzar also made Daniel the ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 6:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; [2] And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. [3] Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."

Daniel was not only excellent in the Babylonian empire, but he was also excellent in the Persian empire despite being quite stricken in years than he was during the previous reigns. King Darius saw this excellence and set him among one of the three presidents and made him the first among them. This is the true fulfillment of the promise that God gives to his obedient children, promising them that they shall be first and not last (Deuteronomy 28:13). The king set Daniel over the entire realm. Daniel consistently obtained a good reputation by faith. If you want to go higher in life without stopping, if you want to always obtain a good reputation, always have faith.

The Three Hebrew Boys

Daniel 2:17-19 (KJV) – "[17] Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: [18] That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19] Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Daniel 2:49 (KJV) – "Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego lived in harmony with God's commandments. Therefore, when Daniel was blessed, they were blessed too because Daniel requested the king to set them over the affairs of the kingdom. By faith Daniel and his friends obtained a good reputation.

Daniel 3:16-27 (KJV) - "[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. [17] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. [19] Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. [20] And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. [21] Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. [22] Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. [23] And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. [24] Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. [25] He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. [26] Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. [27] And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to face death rather than worship the idol that the king had set up. The king heated the fiery furnace seven times so that these faithful young men

could suffer the most painful death ever. The furnace was extremely hot that those who threw them in did not survive, they died on the spot.

When King Nebuchadnezzar went to check the fate that had befallen the three Hebrew Boys, he was expecting that the worst had happened to them. He was surprised to see that they had not burnt even a single bit, and they were joined with another person who was not thrown in who was Jesus. The faith of the three Hebrew boys made them get a good reputation in the eyes of the pagan king, the Babylonian people and those of us who read about them today.

King Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian King)

King Nebuchadnezzar, though not typically remembered for acts of faith like biblical figures such as Abraham or Moses, had key moments in his life where he recognized and expressed faith in the power and sovereignty of God.

King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God's power after the fiery furnace incident. After witnessing the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the greatness of God and decreed that no one should speak against Him.

Daniel 3:29 (KJ21) - "Therefore I make a decree: That every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other god who can deliver after this sort."

King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished when he saw what God can do. He acknowledged that no other God could deliver like the way the true God did. He had worshiped other gods but none of the gods he had worshiped had shown such tremendous power. A point of thought: If God delivered the three Hebrew boys from the deadly fiery furnace, what can't he deliver you from?

King Nebuchadnezzar recognized God's superiority when Daniel interpreted his dream. When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king acknowledged that Daniel's God was the "God of gods" and a revealer of mysteries, showing respect for God's wisdom.

Daniel 2:47 (KJ21) - “The king answered unto Daniel and said, ‘Truly, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.’”

Following a period of humbling madness (as prophesied by Daniel), Nebuchadnezzar repented and acknowledged the sovereignty of the Most High God, praising and honoring Him for His eternal dominion.

Daniel 4:34 (KJ21) - “And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him who liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.”

After being restored to his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar openly declared God’s power, justice, and ability to humble the proud, demonstrating a profound recognition of God’s authority.

Daniel 4:37 (KJ21) - “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment; and those who walk in pride He is able to abase.”

King Nebuchadnezzar started off as a pagan king but ended up being a righteous king, believing in God. He was saved. He wrote Daniel chapter 4. His faith in God gave him a good reputation.

Nehemiah

The name Nehemiah comes from the Hebrew name נְחֶמְיָה (Nechemyah), which means “Yahweh (God) comforts” or “The Lord comforts.” This name reflects the comfort and restoration that God brought to His people through Nehemiah's leadership during a time of great distress and rebuilding.

Nehemiah lived up to the meaning of his name, as he played a key role in comforting and restoring the Jewish people by leading them to rebuild their city and their faith.

Nehemiah was a key figure in the Old Testament, known primarily for his leadership in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the Israelites returned from Babylonian exile. He served as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia, a position of high trust and influence, which allowed him direct access to the king.

Nehemiah was deeply concerned about the state of Jerusalem when he learned that its walls were still in ruins, leaving the city vulnerable to enemies. He prayed earnestly to God and then courageously requested permission from the king to return and lead the effort to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

These are some of the acts of faith that Nehemiah did:

Prayer and Fasting for Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1:4 (KJV) - "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

When Nehemiah heard about the broken walls of Jerusalem, he immediately turned to God in prayer and fasting. This simple action showed his faith in God's power to help.

Fasting is a sacrificial act. Many Christians find it hard to fast for their own needs, let alone the needs of others. Nehemiah's love for his people made him fast and pray for them when he heard about the broken walls of Jerusalem. He denied himself food to pray and fast for other people. It is an act of faith to go the extra mile to sacrifice for others. Not just your family, friends and loved ones, but other people whom you do not know.

Nehemiah 1:11 (KJV) - "O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name: and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

Nehemiah is earnestly asking God to listen to his prayer and the prayers of other Israelites who "fear" (respect, revere, and honor) God. His language ("I beseech Thee") reflects deep humility and urgency. Nehemiah shows his faith by believing that God hears the prayers of those who are devoted to Him and genuinely seek His favor.

Nehemiah prays for success and asks God to bless his efforts. He believes that his plans and actions can only succeed if they have God's approval and aid. Here, Nehemiah is preparing to approach the king with a bold request, to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. Nehemiah accompanied his faith with actions. He prayed and believed that God would bless his efforts.

The phrase "this day" indicates that Nehemiah is seeking God's immediate help for an upcoming situation, specifically his interaction with the king. "This man," refers to King Artaxerxes, the Persian ruler Nehemiah served. Although Artaxerxes was a powerful and authoritative king, Nehemiah refers to him simply as "this man," which demonstrates his recognition that God is the true sovereign ruler above all earthly kings.

Nehemiah asked God to grant him favor and mercy in the eyes of the king, because his request to leave and rebuild Jerusalem could be seen as risky or rebellious. He relies on God's intervention to soften the king's heart. Nehemiah's role as the king's cupbearer was one of trust and responsibility. As the cupbearer, he had direct access to the king and was responsible for tasting the king's wine to ensure it was not poisoned. His position gave him a unique opportunity to present his request to the king.

Nehemiah acknowledged that God had placed him in a trusted position in the Persian court, which he saw as part of God's plan to help His people. Despite his important role, Nehemiah's heart was with the well-being of Jerusalem, and he was willing to take the risk of asking for help.

Nehemiah kept the Sabbath principle as he fully depended on God the Creator of success. Before taking any action, he seeks God's guidance and intervention, recognizing that it is God who ultimately controls the outcome. Nehemiah was about to approach a powerful king with a significant and potentially dangerous request. Despite the risk, he trusts that God will give him the courage and favor needed.

Even though Nehemiah holds a high position in the king's court, he humbly asks God to act on his behalf. His humility is clear in his recognition of his need for divine help, despite his human influence. Nehemiah understood that even the heart of a king is under God's control (Proverbs 21:1, Ezra 7:27). Nehemiah prayed for God to guide and shape the outcome of his meeting with the king.

Boldness to Request Permission from the King

Nehemiah showed faith in God by asking King Artaxerxes for permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls, trusting that God would grant him favor.

Nehemiah 2:4-5 (KJV) - "[4] And the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. [5] And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."

King Artaxerxes I, told Nehemiah to make his request. Before Nehemiah made his request, he prayed to God. Make prayer a prerequisite before you do anything, even the smallest of things. This is because God is the way (John 14:6). Therefore, when you pray before you do anything, God will give you the best direction in doing that thing. After he prayed, he went ahead to make his request to the king. He made his request to the king boldly but politely. You can be bold but also polite. Courage is not rudeness. He requested the king to send him to Judah to rebuild the city walls.

Trusting God's Hand in the Favor of the King

Nehemiah 2:8 (KJV) - "And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me."

Nehemiah recognized that it was God's hand that made the king grant him his request, showing his faith in God's providence. Nehemiah acknowledged that even though it was the king who had granted him permission to rebuild the walls, it was God who had worked in the king's heart. We often like putting God out of the picture. We want to appreciate ourselves and everyone else, but we rarely appreciate and acknowledge God. Nehemiah acknowledged that God's hand was upon him.

Rallying the People to Rebuild

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (KJV) - "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

Nehemiah's faith in God's plan gave him the confidence to rally the people of Jerusalem to join him in rebuilding the city walls, assuring them that God would help them succeed.

Mobilization is a great skill, especially for a leader. Leaders ought to gain wisdom from God on how to mobilize people to do a righteous assignment. Nehemiah first told them of the distress that they were going through, how Jerusalem was in waste and how the gates were burned with fire. He told them to rebuild Jerusalem so that they cannot be reproached again. Nehemiah's call caused them to work hard in rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah's faith resulted in a good reputation.

Praying Against Opposition

Nehemiah 4:4 (KJV) - "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity."

Nehemiah 4:9 (KJV) - "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

When Nehemiah faced opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and other enemies, he demonstrated his faith by praying to God for strength and protection. Nehemiah prayed continually for God to enable them to overcome opposition over their enemies.

Their enemies despised them; therefore, he prayed for God to turn their reproach upon their own head and give them for a prey in the land of captivity (Nehemiah 4:4). They prayed unto God and set a watch against the day and night (Nehemiah 4:9). They did not just pray and sit down and relax. They showed their faith through actions by setting a full time watch against them.

Trusting God While Working Under Threat

Nehemiah 4:14 (KJV) - "And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Nehemiah 4:20 (KJV) - "In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us."

Nehemiah showed his faith in God's protection by continuing to work on the walls, even while facing constant threats. He encouraged the people to defend themselves but also to trust that God would fight for them. They were to fight the battle, but the victory would come from God. When embarking on God's mission, you may face a lot of opposition. Worry not because victory comes from God.

Refusing to Be Distracted by Enemies

Nehemiah 6:3 (KJV) - "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"

When Nehemiah's enemies attempted to lure him away from the work through deception, he refused, demonstrating faith that God's work must not be interrupted. As Myron Golden often says, "Disruption follows intention." Beware of the disruptions. When you are conducting a godly assignment, lots of disruptions are going to come your way to divert your attention from that noble and righteous work that you are doing. Pray to God to enable you overcome the disruptions. Do not for a moment pause or stop doing the Lord's work.

Refusal to Exploit the People for Personal Gain

Nehemiah 5:15 (KJV) - "But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God."

Nehemiah showed faith by not taking advantage of his position as governor. He refused the food allowance and instead worked for the welfare of the people, trusting God to reward him. Nehemiah did not take the extra allowances given to him because of the fear of God.

Nehemiah had a right to take those benefits, but he did not. The selflessness that God had cultivated in him made him refuse what was rightfully given to him and what he truly deserved so that the people around him could live a better life. The world would be so much better if we had leaders with such a mindset.

Faithful Dedication of the Completed Wall

Nehemiah 12:27 (KJV) - “And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.”

Once the wall was completed, Nehemiah demonstrated his faith by organizing a dedication ceremony to thank and honor God for His faithfulness and help. They worshiped and praised God with all their hearts. They had no limitations. They used a variety of instruments to praise God and to dedicate the completed wall. Make it a practice to dedicate every new thing that you have acquired to God, no matter how small it is.

Continual Dependence on God through Prayer

Nehemiah 5:19 (KJV) - “Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”

Nehemiah 13:14 (KJV) - “Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.”

Throughout Nehemiah's leadership, he continually prayed and sought God's guidance, always relying on God for strength and wisdom. You should pray to God all the time, for God to give you the proper direction in your life. You should surrender to God at each moment, faithfully yielding to His control.

Nehemiah’s actions of faith were grounded in prayer, dependence on God, and unwavering determination to complete the work God had given him, even amidst great opposition. His life is an inspiring example of leadership and faithfulness.

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Ezra

Ezra was a Jewish priest, scribe, and leader who played a crucial role in the spiritual and religious restoration of the Jewish people following their return from Babylonian exile. His life and work are recorded in the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. Ezra was a descendant of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, which gave him a strong priestly lineage and authority among the Jewish people.

Ezra lived during the reign of Artaxerxes I, king of Persia, around the mid-5th century BC. After the first wave of Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, Ezra led a second group of exiles back to Jerusalem to teach God's law and restore proper worship.

The name Ezra (עֶזְרָא) means "help" or "helper." This name reflects his role as one who was sent by God to help restore the religious life of the Jewish people during their return to Jerusalem. Ezra, as a faithful priest and scribe, was instrumental in guiding the people back to faithful observance of God's law, making him a "helper" in the spiritual rebuilding of the nation.

Ezra's key accomplishments include:

1. **Leading a group of exiles back to Jerusalem** from Babylon in 458 BC, where he sought to re-establish the observance of the Mosaic Law and renew the covenant between the people and God.
2. **Teaching and interpreting the Law of Moses** to the people of Israel, encouraging them to live according to God's commandments.
3. **Confronting social and religious issues**, such as the problem of intermarriage with foreign nations, which was against the law of God at that time.

His efforts, especially concerning the people's spiritual well-being, led to the renewal of Jewish identity and worship during a critical time in Israel's history.

Background of the Book of Ezra

The Book of Ezra is a historical book in the Old Testament that records the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem and their efforts to rebuild the city and reestablish their religious practices. The book is divided into two main sections, focusing on two key events:

- The Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 1–6).
- The Spiritual Restoration Led by Ezra (Ezra 7–10).

Rebuilding the Temple (Chapters 1–6)

- This section focuses on the first return of the exiles under the leadership of **Zerubbabel** and **Joshua the high priest**. After King **Cyrus of Persia** issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem, they began the process of rebuilding the temple.
- Despite opposition from neighboring nations, the temple was completed in 515 BC under the reign of **King Darius I** of Persia. This part of the book highlights the fulfillment of God's promises and the perseverance of the Jewish people to reestablish worship at the temple.

Spiritual Reformation (Chapters 7–10)

- This section begins with the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes I of Persia. Ezra, a skilled scribe and teacher of the Law, was commissioned by the king to bring religious and civil order to the Jewish community.
- Ezra was deeply concerned with the people's faithfulness to God's Law, and his primary mission was to teach the Law of Moses, ensure its observance, and lead the people in repentance and renewal of their covenant with God.
- One of the major issues Ezra confronted was the problem of Jewish men marrying foreign women, which was against God's command because it often led to the worship of foreign gods. Ezra led the people in repentance and helped them resolve this issue to preserve the purity of their faith.

Historical and Theological Importance

- **The Return from Exile**: The return from Babylonian exile was a fulfillment of God's promise to bring His people back to their land. Ezra's work was crucial in helping the Jewish people reclaim their identity and covenant relationship with God after decades of exile.
- **Reestablishment of the Law**: Ezra emphasized the importance of the Law of Moses, teaching the people to live according to God's commands. His efforts laid the foundation for later Jewish religious practices, including the development of synagogues and the role of scribes as teachers of the law.
- **God's Faithfulness**: The book of Ezra highlights God's faithfulness in restoring His people to their land and helping them rebuild both physically (the temple and city) and spiritually (their relationship with God).
- **Challenges and Opposition**: The book also shows the challenges faced by the Jewish people as they worked to rebuild Jerusalem. Despite opposition from surrounding nations, the perseverance of the people, with God's help, led to the successful rebuilding of the temple and a renewed commitment to the Law.

Here are key actions that demonstrated Ezra's faith in God:

Seeking God's Guidance and Favor through Prayer and Fasting

Ezra 8:21-23 (KJV) - "[21] Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. [22] For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, 'The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath are against all them that forsake Him.' [23] So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He was entreated of us."

The River Ahava mentioned in Ezra 8:21-23 was likely a location or a canal in the region of Babylonia where Ezra and the Jewish exiles gathered before their journey back to Jerusalem. The exact geographical identity of the River Ahava is not known, as it is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, and its specific historical location has not been confirmed by archeological evidence. However, it is believed to have been somewhere in Mesopotamia, possibly a tributary or canal linked to the Euphrates River.

In Hebrew, "Ahava" (אַהָוָא) is related to the root word "ahav" (אָהַב), which means "to love" or "love." Thus, River Ahava means the River of Love. God is love (1 John 4:8). This means that River Ahava was probably a sacred place. It is good to have specific places that are consecrated for prayer.

Ezra's faith in God is demonstrated by his reliance on prayer and fasting when facing challenges. They proclaimed a fast for God to give them direction on everything. They wanted to seek a right way for themselves, for their little ones and for all their substance. They were ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers because they had previously told the king that God was with them.

The fact that Ezra and others fasted for God to give them direction, undoubtedly shows that direction is a very crucial thing. Few people pray for direction, let alone fasting. People often choose a way, not knowing whether that way is wrong or right, then they embark on that way and pray while they are stuck in the middle of that way. Even when they are praying, they barely ask God for direction. Instead, they ask God to clear that wrong way.

Nobody (including the most spiritual people) has a manual on how to go about every tiny aspect of their life. This should draw us closer to God as we need Him in every little step we take to give us the proper direction. Sometimes the direction we are seeking is a major one like marriage, career, academic studies. When seeking to make such major decisions, it is important to fast and pray to God to give you the right direction so that you do not end up messing so many years of your life.

We are sometimes afraid to ask God for direction because we deceitfully think that our ways are better than His ways. God’s way is the highway while our way is the lower way. Our ways compared to God’s ways are so low as the lowest part of the earth to heaven. Many people may not pray for a wife, because they think that God will give them an ugly one with good character

and they want a beautiful one. Many people may not pray for direction in their career because they think God wants them to be a pastor and a pastor job does not look lucrative enough for them.

Many people do not pray for their finances because they think, God does not want them to make much money. What God desires for you is higher than what you want for yourself. You may want to make one billion dollars, but God wants you to make one trillion dollars. You may want to marry a beautiful wife, and God ends up giving you an exceptionally beautiful wife beyond your imagination. When I started being serious with God, God gave me many ideas that are easy to conduct to make money. God is more knowledgeable, understanding, and wise than you.

God is not a substandard God as some pastors and teachers of the Word portray Him to be. God has failed to give some people the best that He has to offer because of their rebelliousness and disobedience. He does that out of love so that they do not mess themselves with the gifts that He has given them.

God is more exposed than you. God is the Creator of all beautiful things, even the ones you have not yet seen. God is greater than you. God is by far richer than you. A God with all these qualities, how can He not want His children to have the best in everything? Therefore, ask God for direction in everything.

Leading the People Back to Jerusalem

Ezra 7:6 (KJV) - “This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.”

Ezra’s faith is shown by his willingness to lead a group of exiles back to Jerusalem. He trusted that God had called him to this task of re-establishing Jewish life and worship in the city. God had made him a scribe and through the power of God, the king granted him his request. Proverbs 21:1 (KJ21) - “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.” We fear earthly rulers because we know what they can do. We are often terrified by them because of the power they display to us.

The fear we have for human leaders tends to overlap the fear of God. Therefore, we are willing to obey a human ruler above God. For example, if a pastor or a church elder tells you to cook on Sabbath, you are willing to put his word above God's Word.

We ought to understand that God is the king of all kings. The hearts of all kings (and all human beings) are in His hands, and He turns them like the rivers of water, whichever direction He chooses. When we disobey God's commandments to please a human being, it often ends up in regrets. Instead of trying to gain favor from human beings through disobeying God's commandments, ask God to give you favor in the eyes of the person that He has sent you to. Through the power of God, Ezra found favor in the eyes of the king.

Devotion to Studying and Teaching the Law of God

Ezra 7:10 (KJV) - "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Ezra had a deep faith in God's Word and was committed to studying and teaching it. His mission was not only to rebuild Jerusalem physically but also to restore the spiritual health of the people by teaching them God's laws. He believed that living according to God's Word was essential for the nation's survival.

Is your heart ready to seek the law of the Lord, to do it and to teach it? Some people are not ready to know God's law. Many more are not ready to obey it and so many more are not ready to teach it. Many Christian Pastors avoid teaching the Ten Commandments. I may not know the reason they are reluctant to do so but I guess it is because they do not want to touch on the Sabbath which they do not keep. God wants a heart that is fully surrendered to Him. He wants a heart that is willing to obey no matter what the cost is. God wants a person that is willing to go the extra mile and to teach it.

Knowing God's law and doing it is for your own benefit. You will have a better life when you obey God as you will access all the promises/blessings in Deuteronomy 28:1-13. Delaying obedience to God is highly detrimental to one's personal life.

Delaying obedience is delaying happiness. Delaying obedience is delaying peace. Delaying obedience is delaying every good thing that God wants to give you. As a Christian who is after God's heart, it is not enough to know what God's Word says and to obey it, you must go an extra mile and teach it. Teaching God's Word makes the truth sink deeper in you. It gives you more understanding. Teaching God's Word makes you benefit others with the divine Word that has benefited you. Ezra had this commitment in his heart. You and I should have the same commitment too.

Interceding for the People

Ezra 9:3-4 (KJV) - "[3] And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonied. [4] Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice."

Ezra mourned, fasted, and prayed over the Israelites' disobedience, demonstrating his deep concern for their holiness and his conviction that repentance was essential for receiving God's blessings (Ezra 9:3-5). The princes approached Ezra to report the abominations committed by the Israelites (Ezra 9:1). They explained that the Israelites had adopted the practices of neighboring and foreign peoples, including the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites (Ezra 9:1-2).

The Israelites had intermarried with other people, making them adopt their culture, thus sinking deeper into sin. When Ezra heard this, he rented his clothes, plucked off his hair from his head and beard. He empathized with them and prayed for them. How much do you love other people that you are willing to tear off a garment that you have bought to pray for them? You do not have to literally tear off your clothes, you can do something that denotes going the extra mile to bring them closer to God.

Leading the People in Repentance

Ezra 9:6 (KJV) - "And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens."

Ezra was ashamed to lift his face before God because of the transgressions that they had committed. Their iniquity kept on increasing. He offered prayers to God so many times as a result of the increase of sin in the land. Sometimes, one can feel that they are bothering God, always going to Him as they keep on repeating the same mistake. Do not get tired of going to God. Pray without giving up. Pray until you get what you are requesting for.

Ezra 10:11 (KJV) - "Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do His pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives."

Ezra boldly confronted sin. He told people what to do to make their ways align with God. He told them to confess before God and to separate themselves from the people of the land and from the strange wives. This command might have seemed impossible for the people to do. This might be because some of the heathen people in that land were nice to them.

Some of those people would give them things that they need that people from their own land were not able to. Some had formed great bonds of friendship. God called them to separate themselves from those people. How could they do that? It was impossible with their own power. If they relied on their own strength, they would fail.

But, if they relied on the mighty and outstretched arm of God, God would have made it easy for them.

Restoring the Covenant

Ezra 10:1 (KJV) - "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore."

Ezra's faith in God's covenant led him to encourage the people to renew their commitment to God's laws. He understood that the exile was the result of Israel's disobedience, and he took bold steps to ensure that the people would not fall into the same sins again.

In Ezra 10:1, Ezra is praying and confessing on behalf of the people of Israel for their sin of intermarriage with foreign nations. This act violated God's commandments, as these marriages often led the Israelites away from worshiping the true God and toward the worship of foreign gods (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). Ezra was deeply grieved because these marriages threatened the spiritual purity and covenant relationship between Israel and God.

After Ezra had prayed, confessed, wept and cast himself down before the house of God, a great congregation assembled before him. The congregation was composed of men, women and children. They came to him with humble hearts which was denoted by their weeping. While Ezra prayed, he might have felt it was an impossibility for the people to change their ways and return to God, seeking him earnestly. The fact that we see the multitude coming to Ezra after Ezra had persisted in prayer, it is evident that God answers prayers and that He touches hearts.

Shechaniah, the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elah, told Ezra that they had trespassed against God and had taken the strange wives of the people of the land (Ezra 10:2). He requested Ezra to collectively make a covenant with God to put away all the strange wives, and those that are born of them and follow God’s law. Making a covenant with God should be beyond mere words. It should be accompanied by actions. Ezra arose and made the chief priests, Levites, and all Israel swear to make this covenant (Ezra 10:5).

Together, they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of captivity and decided to gather themselves together in Jerusalem (Ezra 10:7). Whoever was not going to assemble with them for those three days, all his substance was to be forfeited, and he should be separated from the congregation of those who had been carried away (Ezra 10:8). All men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together in Jerusalem within three days (Ezra 10:9).

Ezra the priest stood up and told them of their transgressions (Ezra 10:10) and told them to make a confession before God and to do God’s pleasure (Ezra 10:11). Confessing before God is great, but it should be accompanied with doing His pleasure. Even if you are not able to fully do it, God should see in you a commitment to do it.

The man by the pool of Bethesda who was sick for thirty-eight years had a commitment to get well that is why he was by the sides of that pool for all those years. When Jesus came to him, He asked

him, “"Wilt thou be made whole? (John 5:6, KJV)" He did not know who Jesus was, but he took up his bed and walked as a response to the command. He yielded to Christ’s command which brought him healing. When making a covenant with God, be willing to do as He has said because He has given you power to do so.

Faith in God's Favor

Ezra 7:21 (KJV) - “And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily.”

Ezra’s faith was tested when he faced opposition from surrounding nations. He believed that God’s favor was more important than any human approval or protection. Despite opposition and possible danger, he continued the work of spiritual reform and the teaching of the Law.

In Ezra 7:21-26, King Artaxerxes granted Ezra significant favor by issuing a decree that provided him with support and resources for his mission to Jerusalem. Here is a summary of the favor that Artaxerxes gave to Ezra. Artaxerxes authorized the treasurers of the region "beyond the river" (west of the Euphrates) to give Ezra whatever he needed from the royal treasury, up to a specific limit. This included silver, wheat, wine, oil, and salt for the temple services Ezra (Ezra 7:21-22). Artaxerxes also decreed that priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants, and other workers in the house of God would be exempt from taxation. (Ezra 7:24).

Ezra was given authority to appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice and teach God's law to those who did not know it in the region beyond the river (Ezra 7:25). Ezra was also given the authority to enforce God's law, including the power to impose penalties, such as death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment, on those who disobeyed the law of God or the king (Ezra 7:26). Artaxerxes' decree showed extraordinary favor toward Ezra and his mission to restore proper worship and justice in Jerusalem, granting him both resources and authority to carry out his work.

Ezra and the people of Israel got favor in the eyes of Artaxerxes because of God's divine intervention. Throughout the book, Ezra repeatedly acknowledges that the good hand of God was

upon him, guiding events in his favor. Ezra was a priest and a skilled scribe well-versed in the Law of Moses. His knowledge, wisdom, and dedication to God's law likely impressed King Artaxerxes. Ezra was not only seen as a religious leader but also as a competent and trustworthy figure to help bring order and stability to the Jewish community in Jerusalem.

Artaxerxes might have seen rebuilding the temple and reestablishing the religious order in Jerusalem as beneficial for the Persian Empire. Supporting the Jewish community and their religious practices could help maintain peace and loyalty in the region. By appointing a loyal and respected Jewish leader like Ezra, the king could ensure that Persian rule was upheld while allowing the Jewish people to govern themselves under their own laws.

Artaxerxes' predecessors, such as Cyrus the Great and Darius I, had also supported the Jewish people. Cyrus had allowed the first wave of exiles to return and begin rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1:1-4), and Darius had reaffirmed this decree (Ezra 6:1-12). Artaxerxes was continuing in this tradition of favoring the Jewish people and supporting their religious practices. All in all, Artaxerxes' favor toward Ezra was primarily the result of God’s providential hand moving the heart of the king, as Ezra acknowledges.

Faithful Preparation and Trust in God’s Protection

Ezra 8:25 (KJV) - “And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.”

Ezra’s faith in God’s guidance was evident in how he carefully organized the return of the exiles, ensuring that the temple treasures were safely transported. He trusted God’s provision for this delicate journey and believed in fulfilling God’s purposes.

In Ezra Chapter 8, Ezra carefully organized the people according to their families and kept a keen record. This chapter details how Ezra gathered the people, ensured they were spiritually prepared for the journey, and trusted God for protection rather than relying on military assistance. Ezra and the returning exiles placed their faith in God through fasting, prayer, and careful stewardship of the temple offerings, demonstrating their reliance on divine guidance and protection.

Ezra 8 begins by listing the names and family heads of those who returned with Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem. It was a substantial number of priests, Levites, and common people, with a total of about 1,500 men, along with women and children.

As Ezra prepared to lead the group back, he realized there were no Levites among the people. Levites were essential for temple service, so Ezra sent for men of understanding who could lead the spiritual activities of the group. They successfully recruited Levites and temple servants to accompany them. This shows that Ezra had respect for the church and for spiritual matters. It is not strange to see Christians when traveling having the Bible as the last thing in their minds to pack in their bags.

People focus on the clothes that they are going to wear as the first thing to pack in their travel bags. After clothes, what is prioritized next is food. Some do not consider carrying Bibles and spiritual books because they do not understand their value. Ezra understood the value of spiritual men and he had to include them in accompanying the group. It is important to have in your team or on the board of directors of your company, at least one spiritual mentor.

Ezra entrusted the gold, silver, and temple vessels that were being returned to Jerusalem to twelve leading priests. He instructed them to guard the offerings carefully, knowing these items were dedicated to the Lord. This demonstrated both Ezra's faith in God's provision and his commitment to integrity (Ezra 8:24-30). After preparing and praying for protection, Ezra and the group departed for Jerusalem. The journey was successful, and they arrived safely without incident because the hand of God was upon them, protecting them from enemies and ambushes along the way (Ezra 8:31-32).

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, the exiles delivered the offerings to the temple and presented them to the priests and Levites. They offered burnt offerings to God, giving thanks for His protection and favor during their journey (Ezra 8:33-35). Ezra also delivered the king's decrees to the local Persian officials, ensuring that they understood the king's support for the Jewish exiles and the rebuilding efforts in Jerusalem (Ezra 8:36).

Ezra's actions of faith were driven by his devotion to God's Word, his commitment to prayer, and his leadership in spiritual reform. Ezra's role in biblical history is that of a spiritual leader and reformer. His dedication to the Law of God and his leadership in the restoration of proper worship

after the exile showed his unwavering faith in God. He trusted in God’s power to protect and guide him, boldly leading the people in repentance and restoration of proper worship.

The Book of Ezra documents not only the rebuilding of the temple but also the revival of Israel’s spiritual identity, demonstrating that physical restoration must be accompanied by a renewed commitment to God’s Word. Ezra's life is an example of how faith in God leads to action, even in the face of opposition and difficulty. By faith, Ezra obtained a good report.

King Solomon

The name Solomon (Hebrew: שְׁלֹמֹה, Shlomoh) is derived from the Hebrew root "shalom", meaning "peace" or "peaceful." Solomon's reign was largely characterized by peace and prosperity, in contrast to the wars his father David had fought. The meaning of his name reflects the nature of his kingdom, which was known for its stability and harmony.

Solomon's father was King David, the second king of Israel and a man described as being after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). David was a warrior monarch who unified Israel and conquered its enemies. Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, the former spouse of Uriah, whom David married after a controversial and sinful affair (2 Samuel 11). After their first child died, Solomon was born, and the prophet Nathan indicated that God had chosen him to succeed David as king (2 Samuel 12:24-25).

Solomon became king around 970 B.C. after his father David’s death. His ascension to the throne was not without conflict; one of David's older sons, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne (1 Kings 1:5-10). However, David, with the help of the prophet Nathan and Bathsheba, ensured that Solomon was anointed and installed as king. Early in his reign, Solomon consolidated his power by dealing decisively with potential threats to his rule, including Adonijah and others (1 Kings 2).

Solomon was likely around 20 years old when he began to reign as king of Israel. Although the Bible does not specify his exact age when he became king, historical estimates and traditional interpretations suggest that he was in his early twenties. Solomon reigned for 40 years over Israel (1 Kings 11:42). After his death, the kingdom of Israel was divided, with his son Rehoboam ruling

Judah (the southern kingdom) and Jeroboam leading the northern tribes in rebellion, forming the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:16-20).

Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem. He constructed the magnificent Jerusalem temple using the materials that his father had previously offered. He constructed it as a place of worship for the Israelites and as a symbol of God's presence among them (1 Kings 6-8)

Solomon requested wisdom from God. He humbly asked God for wisdom to govern the people of Israel and God granted him his request. Not only did God give him wisdom, but He also gave him riches that he had not requested and promised to give him long life if he obeyed His commandments (1 Kings 3:5-14, 2 Chronicles 1:7-12).

Solomon dispensed wise judgments. Through the wisdom that God gave him, he was able to make fair and just decisions. For example, the famous judgment between two women claiming to be the mother of the same child (1 Kings 3:16-28). God's divine wisdom makes you do things that human beings find difficult and impossible to do.

Solomon authored the books of Proverbs (most of it) and Ecclesiastes, providing invaluable wisdom and insights on various aspects of life. Solomon also composed the poetic book known as the Song of Solomon. Solomon engaged in peaceful alliances and trade. He established diplomatic relationships and engaged in prosperous trade with neighboring nations, contributing to the economic growth and stability of Israel. One example is the Queen of Sheba. The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon because she had heard of his wisdom. She was amazed by his wealth, wisdom, and the splendor of his kingdom (1 Kings 10:1-13).

Solomon undertook extensive construction projects, including the fortification of Jerusalem and the establishment of several cities, strengthening the kingdom (1 Kings 9:15-19). Solomon upheld the worship of God as established by his father, David, and ensured the proper functioning of the priesthood and the offerings at the Temple (1 Kings 9:25). Solomon left a legacy of wisdom. His wisdom and teachings have inspired generations, and his reputation as a wise person has endured for generations (1 Kings 4:29-34).

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King Hezekiah

The name Hezekiah (Hebrew: חִזְקִיָּה or חִזְקִיָּהוּ, Chizqiyah or Chizqiyahu) means “The Lord is my strength” or “God strengthens.” This name reflects Hezekiah's reliance on God during his reign as king of Judah and his faith in God's power and deliverance.

Hezekiah was one of the most righteous and reformative kings of Judah, known for his faith in God and efforts to bring spiritual revival to his kingdom. He ruled Judah from approximately 715 to 686 B.C. during a turbulent time in Israel's history, particularly facing threats from the powerful Assyrian Empire.

Hezekiah died at the age of 54. He began ruling at the age of 25 and reigned for 29 years (2 Kings 18:2). Toward the end of his reign, he became seriously ill, and God extended his life by 15 years after he prayed (2 Kings 20:6), meaning he was around 39 years old at the time of his illness and lived until the age of 54. His reign is described primarily in 2 Kings 18–20, 2 Chronicles 29–32, and Isaiah 36–39.

King Hezekiah removed idolatry and restored worship of the true God. He initiated religious reforms by removing idols and restoring the proper worship of God in the temple (2 Chronicles 31:1). He repaired and purified the temple, restoring it to its rightful place as a center of worship and sacrifice (2 Chronicles 29:3-19).

Hezekiah reinstituted the celebration of the Passover, calling all Israel and Judah to observe the important religious feast (2 Chronicles 30:1-26). He trusted in God during the Assyrian invasion. When the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, threatened to invade Jerusalem, Hezekiah turned to God in prayer and trusted in His deliverance (2 Kings 19:14-19, 2 Chronicles 32:20-22).

During the reign of King Hezekiah, God sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army outside the walls of Jerusalem, sparing the city and its inhabitants (2 Kings 19:35). Hezekiah ordered the construction of a tunnel, known as Hezekiah's Tunnel or the Siloam Tunnel, to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem during the Assyrian siege (2 Kings 20:20). When Hezekiah was terminally ill, he prayed to God, and God granted him healing and extended his life by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:1-7).

He built storage cities and organized military preparations: Hezekiah prepared for potential military threats by constructing storage cities and organizing the army, ensuring the security and readiness of the kingdom (2 Chronicles 32:27-30). Hezekiah invited all the people of Judah to come and worship at the temple, encouraging a renewed commitment to God (2 Chronicles 29:5-11). King Hezekiah's righteousness and prosperous reign attracted tribute and admiration from neighboring nations (2 Chronicles 32:23). By faith, Hezekiah obtained a good report.

King Josiah

“In former years the king had not been indifferent to the prevailing idolatry. “In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young,” he had consecrated himself fully to the service of God. Four years later, at the age of twenty, he had made an earnest effort to remove temptation from his subjects by purging “Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.” “They brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.” 2 Chronicles 34:3-5.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 396.3, Ellen G. White.

“Not content with doing thorough work in the land of Judah, the youthful ruler had extended his efforts to the portions of Palestine formerly occupied by the ten tribes of Israel, only a feeble remnant of which now remained. “So did he,” the record reads, “in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali.” Not until he had traversed the length and breadth of this region of ruined homes, and “had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel,” did he return to Jerusalem. Verses 6, 7.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 397.1, Ellen G. White.

“Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God's holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in

the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 198.1, Ellen G. White.

The name Josiah (Hebrew: יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ, Yoshiyahu) means "The Lord heals" or "The Lord supports." This name reflects God's role in Josiah's life, particularly in the spiritual revival and healing of Judah's relationship with God during his reign.

Josiah was one of the most righteous kings of Judah, renowned for his religious reforms and efforts to return the people to the worship of the One true God. He was a descendant of King David, specifically from the line of kings in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Josiah's father was Amon, a wicked king who reigned for only two years before being assassinated by his own officials (2 Kings 21:23-24). His mother was Jedidah (2 Kings 22:1). Josiah's grandfather was Manasseh, one of the evilest kings of Judah, who led the nation into deep idolatry. However, toward the end of his life, Manasseh repented (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

Despite coming from a heritage of an evil father and grandfather, Josiah did not follow after their wicked ways. Instead, he followed the ways of the Lord. Some people proudly emulate the wicked things people in their lineage used to do. Instead of learning and running from their mistakes, they run into the same mistakes.

Josiah became king at just eight years old after the assassination of his father, Amon, in around 640 B.C. (2 Kings 22:1). He reigned for 31 years over Judah until his death. (2 Kings 22:1). Despite his youthful age, Josiah proved to be a king who was deeply committed to following the ways of God.

When Josiah was about 16 years old, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David (2 Chronicles 34:3). At the age of 20, he initiated a massive religious reform by removing the high places, idols, Asherah poles, and altars to foreign gods that had been established during the reigns of his predecessors (2 Chronicles 34:3-7).

One of his major achievements was the repair and restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. While this work was being carried out, the Book of the Law (likely the Book of Deuteronomy) was discovered in the Temple by the high priest Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:8). This discovery deeply affected

Josiah, and after hearing the words of the law, he tore his clothes in mourning, realizing how far Judah had strayed from God's commands (2 Kings 22:11).

Josiah responded by calling for a renewed commitment to following God. He gathered the people together and read the Book of the Law publicly. The king and the people made a covenant to obey the Lord and follow His commands (2 Kings 23:1-3).

King Josiah destroyed the idols and altars throughout Judah and even extended his reforms into the former northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 23:4-20). He reinstated the celebration of Passover in a grand manner, a festival that had not been observed with such dedication since the days of the judges (2 Kings 23:21-23). His reforms were not just superficial; Josiah sought to restore the hearts of the people to genuine worship of the Lord.

Around 609 B.C., Josiah met his end in battle at Megiddo. He attempted to stop the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II from passing through Judah to aid the Assyrians against the Babylonians. Despite warnings, Josiah engaged Necho's forces in battle and was mortally wounded (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24). He was brought back to Jerusalem, where he died at the age of 39. He died at a relatively young age, but he obtained a good report through the faith he showed when he made righteous reforms when he was a king.

King Jehoshaphat

The name Jehoshaphat (Hebrew: יְהוֹשָׁפָט, Yehoshafat) means "The Lord judges" or "Yahweh has judged". The name reflects a trust in God's righteous judgment and justice.

Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah, known for his religious reforms, military successes, and alliances. He ruled Judah during a time of relative peace and prosperity, yet also faced significant challenges due to his political alliances.

Jehoshaphat's father was King Asa, one of Judah's righteous kings who had implemented significant religious reforms (1 Kings 15:11). Asa's example of following the Lord likely influenced Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat's mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi (1 Kings 22:42). Jehoshaphat's son and successor was Jehoram, who later married the daughter of the wicked King Ahab of Israel, leading to complications for Judah (2 Kings 8:16-18).

Jehoshaphat became king of Judah at the age of 35 and reigned for 25 years, meaning he reigned until he was sixty years old (1 Kings 22:42). He is estimated to have reigned from 872 B.C. to 848 B.C. He followed in the ways of his father Asa, seeking to honor God, and he is generally remembered as a righteous king.

Religious Reforms

Early in his reign, Jehoshaphat sought to strengthen the spiritual life of Judah by removing the high places and Asherah poles, which were used for idol worship (2 Chronicles 17:6). He worked diligently to lead the people back to the worship of the true God.

One of his notable acts was sending officials, Levites, and priests throughout Judah to teach the Book of the Law to the people (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). This move emphasized his commitment to ensuring that the people of Judah were familiar with God's laws and followed them. If you do not have the capacity to preach the gospel but could support one who can, do not hesitate to do so. Support for God's ministry can come in various ways. The most common ones are through money and offering one's services.

Another way you can support the Lord's ministry is through encouraging the people who are in active service to God. When you see someone working for God, say a kind word to them, let them know that you acknowledge their sacrifice. Give opportunities to gospel ministers, missionaries and other people with various talents to serve God, just like Jehoshaphat did. He sent the Levites and others to teach people God's Word.

Military and Political Successes

Jehoshaphat was also a skilled military leader. He strengthened Judah by fortifying cities and placing garrisons in various regions (2 Chronicles 17:2). His military prowess brought peace to Judah, as surrounding nations feared his power and paid tribute (2 Chronicles 17:10-11). Jehoshaphat's army grew significantly during his reign, reaching impressive numbers (2 Chronicles 17:14-19), reflecting the strength and security of Judah under his leadership.

Alliance with Ahab of Israel

Jehoshaphat made a political alliance with King Ahab of Israel by marrying his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2 Kings 8:18). This alliance was probably a strategic move, but it had negative spiritual implications because Ahab and his family were deeply involved in the worship of Baal.

Despite Ahab's wickedness, Jehoshaphat joined him in battle against Ramoth Gilead, even though the prophet Micaiah had warned that the Lord did not approve of the venture (1 Kings 22:1-28). Ahab was killed in this battle. Jehoshaphat was almost killed but he survived by shouting out in fear in the heat of the conflict. The people thought that it was Ahab, the king of Israel. When they saw it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him (1 Kings 22:29-33).

2 Corinthians 6:14 (KJV) - "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Amos 3:3 (KJV) - "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

It is like dancing on a one-thousand-foot cliff that has thin ice with spiked heels or playing catch with a hand grenade when you deliberately form an alliance with an unbeliever. Jehoshaphat was almost killed because of forming an alliance with Ahab. There are innocent people in prison today and some have been killed because of being friends with criminals, while their criminal friends are walking scot-free.

You may have a friend who is a criminal who may ask you to accompany him to go somewhere. While you are walking together, something unexpected happens, for instance, policemen catch you by surprise. Since he is an experienced criminal, he is always aware of his environment, and he knows that something like that may happen at any time. His experience has even made him develop sharp instincts that can make him sense incoming danger. Therefore, he escapes leaving you with a case to answer.

I bet many who are reading this may not have friends who are criminals, but they are forming alliances with unbelieving spouses and business partners. They are trying their best to mix the

unmixable water with oil or light with darkness. God, the Creator, created certain things that are easy to mix, and He also created certain things that are impossible to mix.

Day and night can never mix. It will be a waste of time to try to mix them. God cannot be at the center of such alliances since one of you does not believe in Him. Therefore, He will not take part in building whatever you are building and if He does not take part in it, all that you are doing, you will be doing it in vain. This does not mean we neglect and hate unbelievers. We should reach out to them but not form alliances with them because it will be fighting against oneself.

Judicial Reforms and Leadership

Jehoshaphat focused on strengthening the judicial system in Judah. He appointed judges in the land and instructed them to judge according to God's law, not for personal gain or partiality (2 Chronicles 19:5-7). Such a king in this modern age would be a great blessing to whatever kingdom he would be leading. We live in a time whereby ordained people of God practice no justice. They show partiality and they conduct their leadership for personal gain.

A pastor may fail to advise a church member concerning a sin he has committed because the church member has gifted him a car or a house. Presidents, particularly in third world countries are sometimes under the subjection of evil people who give them money in exchange for subverting the law of the Lord. Our churches have been corrupted.

The person who commands the most respect and whose word is final is the one who has the most money. Sometimes we allow our churches to be controlled by outside forces. For example, you may hear a church leader forbidding people to preach or teach about the Sabbath because there are people in the congregation who are not Sabbath keepers. The truth should be taught in love, but the truth must be taught. Truth is not subject to external forces or internal, it stands firm on its own because God is truth.

Some of these people give politicians money to campaign and together they sign a deal. Once they get the political seat, they are left with no choice but to impose wicked schemes on the people of that nation. We need leaders who are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, who cannot

be cheaply bought with material things. We need leaders who will uphold God's law, no matter the cost.

Jehoshaphat established a court system in Jerusalem to deal with difficult cases and placed Levites, priests, and family heads in positions of authority (2 Chronicles 19:8-11). His emphasis on justice and righteousness in governance was a hallmark of his reign.

Jehoshaphat's Great Act of Faith

One of Jehoshaphat's most famous acts of faith occurred when the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites formed a massive alliance and came against Judah (2 Chronicles 20:1-2). Three armies against one. Faced with overwhelming odds, Jehoshaphat called the people of Judah to fast and seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:3).

In a public prayer, Jehoshaphat acknowledged God's power and sovereignty, placing his full trust in Him. His famous prayer includes the words, "We have no might against this great company... neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12, KJV). In response, the Spirit of the Lord came upon a Levite named Jahaziel, who assured them that the battle belonged to God and that they would not need to fight (2 Chronicles 20:15-17). Jehoshaphat prayed to God and God responded through someone in the congregation.

God does not always answer your prayers directly to you. He will often answer your prayers through someone else. You need to be obedient and submissive to God's Word to hear the answers to your prayers.

God may answer your prayers through someone whom you really like. He may answer your prayers through someone who really likes you. He may answer your prayers through someone you hate and despise. In other words, He may answer your prayers through anybody because He is God, He loves everybody, and He wants you to love everybody as well.

Jehoshaphat led the people in worship and praise, and when they went to the battlefield the next day, they found that the enemy armies had turned on each other, destroying themselves without Judah lifting a sword (2 Chronicles 20:20-24). This victory demonstrated Jehoshaphat's trust in God and led to great praise and thanksgiving to God throughout Judah.

Jehoshaphat did many acts of faith. He died at the age of sixty, having reigned for 25 years (2 Chronicles 20:31). He was buried with honor in the City of David, and his son Jehoram succeeded him (2 Chronicles 21:1).

Jehoshaphat, whose name means "The Lord judges", was a righteous king of Judah who is remembered for his religious reforms, judicial improvements, and acts of faith. His reign was marked by peace, prosperity, and a notable reliance on God, particularly during the threat of invasion. However, his political alliances with Israel's wicked kings led to some spiritual and military challenges. Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years and died at the age of 60, leaving a legacy of a king who sought to follow God despite occasional missteps. By faith, Jehoshaphat obtained a good report.

King Asa

Asa (אָסָא) in Hebrew is believed to mean "healer" or "physician." King Asa ruled the Kingdom of Judah. His reign began around 911 BC and lasted until 870 BC. He became king after his father, Abijah, and was the third king of Judah. King Asa is thought to have begun ruling at about 18 or 20 years old, though the Bible does not specify his exact age at the start of his reign. This estimation comes from the typical age of kings at the time. King Asa reigned for 41 years, a significant period of stability for the kingdom during which he was known for his religious reforms and military success.

King Asa was the third king of Judah, following the reigns of his father Abijah and grandfather Rehoboam, and he is notable for his reforms to bring Judah back to the worship of God. Asa ruled during a time when both Judah and Israel were experiencing internal and external conflicts. His reign is characterized by efforts to restore the true worship of God and secure the kingdom of Judah from both spiritual decay and external threats.

Asa's father was Abijah (Abijam), who ruled for three years and continued some of the sinful practices of Rehoboam. Despite this, Abijah's reign was marked by some victories, particularly against Jeroboam of Israel (1 Kings 15:3-8). Asa's grandfather was Rehoboam, the first king of Judah after the kingdom was split into two (Israel and Judah) following the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 14:21-31).

Asa came to power at a time when Judah was recovering from the spiritual decline caused by idol worship under previous kings. Asa's reign is recorded in both 1 Kings 15:9-24 and 2 Chronicles 14-16. Asa's reign is distinguished by his efforts to lead Judah back to the worship of the One true God, in contrast to his father and grandfather, who allowed idolatry to flourish in Judah.

Religious Reforms

King Asa can be likened to King Josiah who did not follow after the ways of his father and grandfather. The Bible is rich in examples of people who followed the ways of God despite coming from family backgrounds of people who disobeyed God. We have similar examples in modern times. There are many people who are responsible fathers now who were brought up by irresponsible fathers.

Asa's first major acts as king were focused on religious reforms. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as David had done (1 Kings 15:11). He worked to remove idol worship from Judah by: Removing the male shrine prostitutes and destroying the idols that had been set up by his predecessors (1 Kings 15:12). He deposed his grandmother, Maacah, from her position as queen mother because she had made an Asherah pole, a symbol of idol worship (1 Kings 15:13).

You should place God's law above family, no matter how much you love your family. Subverting God's will to make your family happy may appear as if you love them but you do not really love them. God is love (1 John 4:8), and love comes from God. Therefore, God defines what love is (1 Corinthians 1:1-13, John 14:15). When you place obedience to God above those whom you love the most, you will benefit them as you will shine a light and add salt to their lives.

A Perfect Heart

On the other hand, when you place them above God's Word, you will be destroying them unknowingly. Asa loved his grandmother Maacah, but he had to remove her from the position of queen mother because she was using that position to lead people to idolatry. She was not only sinning, but she was also leading more people to sin, and Asa had to bring that to an end.

Asa's heart was described as "perfect with the Lord all his days" (1 Kings 15:14), which indicates his sincerity in seeking to restore true worship of God, although the high places were not entirely removed. He might not have known his heart was perfect, but God described his heart as perfect. God covers you with His righteousness. He fills the gaps in your life that you can never fill.

Faith builds Impenetrable Walls

During his reign, Asa faced military threats, particularly from Zerah the Ethiopian, who invaded Judah with a vast army. Asa demonstrated his faith in God by praying for deliverance, saying, "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude." (2 Chronicles 14:11, KJV).

God answered Asa's prayer, and the Ethiopians were defeated (2 Chronicles 14:12-15). This victory was significant and underscored Asa's faith in God's power to protect Judah. Faith builds impenetrable spiritual walls that are stronger than the strongest physical walls that you know. Job had that wall (hedge) around him. You and I can have the same if we surrender fully to His control.

Further Religious Reforms and Covenant Renewal

2 Chronicles 15:1-2 (KJ21) - "[1] And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. [2] And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found by you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."

After the victory over the Ethiopians, Asa was encouraged by Azariah, who told him that the Lord would be with him if he continued to seek Him (2 Chronicles 15:1-2). He told Asa, together with the entire tribes of Judah and Benjamin that God will continue being with them while they continue being with Him. God is always at the door of your heart knocking (Revelation 3:20), but He cannot force Himself inside if you do not allow Him.

God wants to be in synchronization with you, which is why He bids you to abide in Him as He abides in you (John 15:4). If you abide in Him and He abides by you, you will bear so much fruit

(John 15:5) because it will be a blessed partnership. God wanted Asa, and the rest of the people to continue bearing fruits. He gave them this message through Azariah. He gave them this message after they had gained victory over the Ethiopians.

When God causes our efforts to bear fruit, we tend to forget Him and leave Him. Due to the fullness of bread (He has given us), we feel that what we have is sufficient and we do not need anything more. Therefore, we do not need Him. What usually happens is our supply gets cut short because we have separated ourselves from the Eternal Supplier. What we thought was a lot, like the prodigal son, we come to realize it was not as much as we thought. God did not want King Asa to go through all that. Therefore, He bid him to keep on abiding by Him.

Asa gathered the people of Judah and renewed their covenant with the Lord, promising to seek Him with all their hearts. They also celebrated a large sacrifice to God, and the people rejoiced (2 Chronicles 15:10-15). Asa removed the idols from all the lands of Judah, Benjamin, and the cities he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He also repaired the altar of the Lord in the Temple (2 Chronicles 15:8).

Alliance with Aram (Syria) and Later Decline in Faith

In Asa's later years, he faced a threat from Baasha, the king of Israel, who fortified Ramah to block trade and movement into Judah. Instead of relying on God as he had done in earlier battles, Asa made an alliance with Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram (Syria). He bribed Ben-Hadad with treasures from the Temple and royal palace to break his treaty with Baasha and attack Israel (2 Chronicles 16:1-6). We often forget that it is the Lord who has given us the success that we possess.

Many people, before becoming successful, used to pray persistently with faith and would show stupendous commitment to Godly matters. God saw their diligence in seeking Him and He chose to bless them. They were grateful to God for giving them those blessings. The blessings they had gained became too much to a point that they forgot that it was God who gave them those blessings. Therefore, they started depending on their own selves.

Asa forgot that it was God who gave him previous victories. This made him start leaning on his own understanding to attain future victories. The first word in the Sabbath commandment is,

“Remember” (Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath commandment points us to depend on God since it mentions God as the Creator. We need to remember the Sabbath all the time and since God is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8), we should remember God all the time. It is when we forget God that we begin declining in life because our own ways are downward ways.

While this strategy that Asa employed seemed to succeed, as it was able to remove Baasha’s threat, Asa was rebuked by the prophet Hanani for relying on human alliances instead of trusting in the Lord (2 Chronicles 16:7-9). I have used the phrase “seemed to succeed” because success is not acquiring the results that you desire, it is acquiring the results that God desires. God would have given him greater success had he relied on Him. Asa’s failure to rely on God in his later years was a contrast to his earlier acts of faith.

Illness and Death

In the final years of his reign, Asa developed a severe foot disease. However, instead of seeking God for healing, he relied solely on physicians (2 Chronicles 16:12). This act is seen as a further sign of his spiritual decline in his later years.

Asa died after 41 years of reign, and he was buried with honor in the City of David, his forefathers’ burial place (2 Chronicles 16:13-14). Despite his later shortcomings, Asa is remembered for his significant reforms and the long period of peace and prosperity that Judah enjoyed during his reign.

King Asa, whose name means "physician" or "healer", was a righteous king of Judah who initiated significant religious reforms to bring the people back to the worship of God. He removed idols, deposed his grandmother for idolatry, and led the nation in renewing their covenant with the Lord.

Asa demonstrated strong faith in God during military crises, especially against Zerah the Ethiopian. However, in his later years, he relied on political alliances and physicians rather than trusting God, marking a spiritual decline. Asa reigned for 41 years, and his legacy is remembered as one of revival and reform, though with a mixed ending to his story. King Asa obtained a good report when he showed faith in God but when he showed doubt, he obtained a bad reputation.

King Jehu

The name Jehu (Hebrew: יֵהוּא, Yehu) means "Yahweh is He" or "The Lord is He", signifying a strong connection to God. The name reflects Jehu's role as an instrument of God's judgment during his reign as king.

Jehu was the tenth king of Israel and reigned during a tumultuous period in Israel's history. He is most famous for his zealous execution of God's judgment against the house of Ahab, purging Israel of Baal worship and removing the wicked royal lineage that had led the nation into idolatry. His reign was characterized by both military conquest and significant religious reforms, though it was also marked by brutality and a failure to fully follow God's commands.

Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphat (not the king of Judah) and a commander in the army of Israel under King Joram (Jehoram), the son of Ahab. His story is prominently recorded in 2 Kings 9-10. Jehu's rise to power began when Elisha, the prophet, sent one of his young disciples to anoint Jehu as king of Israel. God instructed that Jehu be anointed to execute judgment on the house of Ahab and rid Israel of its idolatry (2 Kings 9:1-6).

The anointing was a fulfillment of God's earlier prophecy through Elijah regarding the downfall of Ahab's dynasty because of their evil practices, particularly the idolatry introduced by Ahab's wife, Jezebel (1 Kings 21:21-24).

Jehu's Execution of Judgment

Jehu's primary task as king was to execute God's judgment on the house of Ahab, fulfilling the prophecy against Ahab's lineage. His actions were swift and decisive.

Killing King Joram of Israel: After being anointed, Jehu immediately set out to confront King Joram (Jehoram), the son of Ahab, who was recovering from wounds at Jezreel. Jehu shot Joram with an arrow, killing him (2 Kings 9:24).

Killing King Ahaziah of Judah: King Ahaziah, the king of Judah, who was visiting Joram, also became a target of Jehu's purge. Jehu had him killed as well (2 Kings 9:27).

Killing Jezebel: One of Jehu's most famous actions was his execution of Queen Jezebel. When Jehu arrived at Jezreel, Jezebel tried to charm him, but he ordered her servants to throw her down from a window. She was killed, and her body was devoured by dogs, fulfilling Elijah's prophecy (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Killing the Seventy Sons of Ahab: Jehu continued his purge by orchestrating the execution of seventy sons of Ahab. He sent letters to the leaders of Samaria, demanding the heads of Ahab's sons. They complied, and Jehu displayed the heads publicly (2 Kings 10:1-11).

Killing the Remaining Relatives of Ahab: Jehu also killed relatives of Ahab and associates connected to the royal family, further eradicating Ahab's lineage (2 Kings 10:12-17).

Jehu's Religious Reforms

After executing judgment on the house of Ahab, Jehu turned his attention to Baal worship. Baal worship had been introduced to Israel through Ahab and Jezebel, and Jehu sought to eliminate it from the land.

Killing the Prophets and Worshipers of Baal: Jehu tricked the worshipers of Baal by pretending to hold a great assembly in honor of Baal. Once all the Baal worshipers gathered in the temple, Jehu had them slaughtered, effectively ending the state-sponsored worship of Baal in Israel (2 Kings 10:18-28).

Destroying the Baal Temple: Jehu also destroyed the Baal temple and converted it into a public latrine, symbolically desecrating the place where Baal had been worshiped (2 Kings 10:27-28).

Jehu's Incomplete Faithfulness

While Jehu zealously executed God's judgment and purged Israel of Baal worship, he did not completely turn the nation back to God. He allowed the worship of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan, which had been introduced by Jeroboam (2 Kings 10:29).

Despite his incomplete faithfulness, the Lord commended Jehu for carrying out His judgment and promised that his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel for four generations (2 Kings 10:30). God looks at your strengths more than your weaknesses.

As much as God hates sin, He looks at the good things that you have done more than the evil that you have done. When you repent and change your ways, He will forget all the sins that you had committed. That does not mean you will not face the consequences of your sins. You will still face them, but God will call you His child and your name will be written in the book of life.

However, because Jehu did not fully walk in the ways of the Lord, Israel experienced difficulties during his reign, including the loss of territory to Hazael, the king of Aram (Syria) (2 Kings 10:31-33).

Jehu's Death and Legacy

Jehu reigned as king of Israel for 28 years (2 Kings 10:36). His reign brought significant changes to the spiritual direction of Israel, particularly in terms of eradicating Baal worship.

Despite his zealous actions for the Lord, Jehu's legacy is mixed. While he fulfilled God's command to destroy Ahab's house, his failure to remove the golden calves meant that idolatry continued to persist in Israel, preventing the nation from fully returning to God.

Jehu was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, the first of his descendants to rule after him, in accordance with God's promise. By faith, King Jehu obtained a good reputation. He would have obtained a better reputation if he had acted with more faith.

King Joash

The name Joash (Hebrew: יוֹאָשׁ, Yo'ash) means "Yahweh has given" or "God supports". This name reflects the belief that his reign and life were under God's provision and support.

Joash (also spelled Jehoash) was the eighth king of Judah and ascended to the throne under remarkable circumstances. His reign is notable for his early efforts to restore the worship of God

in Judah and repair the temple. He is also remembered for the dramatic events surrounding his rise to power, as well as the tragic decline of his reign due to his turning away from God later in life.

2 Kings 11:1-3 (KJ21) - "[1] And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal. [2] But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons who were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. [3] And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years. And Athaliah reigned over the land."

Joash was the son of King Ahaziah of Judah, who was killed during the purge led by Jehu. After Ahaziah's death, Joash's grandmother, Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, seized the throne and killed all the royal heirs to establish her own power.

However, Joash was saved by his aunt Jehosheba, the sister of King Ahaziah, who hid him in the temple of God for six years. Jehosheba was the wife of Jehoiada the priest, and they kept Joash hidden from Athaliah's murderous purge (2 Kings 11:1-3; 2 Chronicles 22:10-12).

God is never short of ways to preserve His chosen ones. God preserved Moses from being killed by Pharaoh when Pharaoh had issued a command for the sons of the Israelites to be killed. God also preserved Joash from being killed by his grandmother so that he could inherit the throne later in life. God has preserved His writings over the ages despite the huge opposition it has faced. God preserves and God's purpose must be fulfilled.

Jehoiada's Role in Joash's Reign

At the age of seven, Joash was brought out of hiding by Jehoiada the priest, who organized a coup to depose Athaliah. Jehoiada gathered the military commanders and the people of Judah to crown Joash as king. Athaliah was executed, and Joash was placed on the throne of Judah (2 Kings 11:4-21; 2 Chronicles 23:1-15).

Jehoiada's influence over Joash was critical, particularly during Joash's early reign. Under Jehoiada's guidance, Joash sought to restore the proper worship of Yahweh and renew the covenant between the people and God (2 Chronicles 23:16-17).

Joash's Religious Reforms and Temple Restoration

One of Joash's most significant acts of faith was his dedication to the repair of the temple of God in Jerusalem, which had been neglected and damaged during the reign of his predecessors, particularly under the influence of Athaliah and her promotion of Baal worship.

Joash ordered the priests and Levites to collect funds from the people to restore the temple. When progress was slow, he personally ensured that the funds were responsibly managed, and that the temple was repaired (2 Kings 12:4-14; 2 Chronicles 24:4-14).

The restoration of the temple was a major religious reform that reestablished the proper worship of God in Judah.

Joash's Turning Away from God

Unfortunately, after the death of Jehoiada the priest, Joash's faithfulness to God faltered. Influenced by the princes of Judah, Joash allowed the people to turn to idolatry. As a result, prophets were sent by God to warn Joash and the people, but they did not listen (2 Chronicles 24:17-19).

One of these prophets was Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who rebuked Joash for forsaking God. Tragically, Joash ordered Zechariah to be stoned to death in the temple courtyard, even though Zechariah's father had saved Joash's life (2 Chronicles 24:20-22). Sin makes people easily forget the people who had previously helped them. The pride in their hearts causes them to get puffed. It makes them have a false sense of belief that it is through their own power that they got where they are and that they can do anything they want.

Joash had probably forgotten that it was Zechariah's father who had saved his life. Therefore, he was quick to turn his wrath towards Zechariah. We often forget all the good things that God has done to us, and we turn our backs on Him. The Sabbath day acts as a reminder to remember all the good that the Lord has done for us throughout the week and throughout our entire lives.

Joash's Downfall

Joash's unfaithfulness led to God's judgment. Syria, under King Hazael, attacked Judah and inflicted heavy casualties. Joash was forced to use the temple treasures to buy off Hazael, but this did not fully save him from God's punishment (2 Kings 12:17-18; 2 Chronicles 24:23-24).

Joash's reign ended in tragedy. After his army was defeated by the Syrians, his own servants conspired against him and assassinated him while he lay wounded. The conspiracy was fueled by resentment over his role in the murder of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada (2 Kings 12:19-21; 2 Chronicles 24:25-26).

God has made everyone a leader in their God-given assignment. Some can be leaders in kingdoms, while others can be leaders in business. Others can be leaders in their own style of music and others can be leaders in certain subjects in education. God desires you to lead in whatever scope He has called you to lead. Therefore, He commands you to obey His commandments if you want to continue leading.

Notice in the Sabbath commandment, manservants, maidservants, owners of cattle (animals) and strangers that are within one's gates are mentioned (Exodus 20:10). This shows us that the Sabbath commandment (and all other commandments for that matter) is addressing leaders. At the same time, the Sabbath commandment and all the others are meant to be kept by everybody (Ecclesiastes 12:13). What we can derive from the fourth commandment (and all other commandments), is that everyone is meant to be a leader. God has given you the rules to lead effectively in His Ten Commandments.

God promises in Deuteronomy 28:13 that if you keep His commandments, you will be first and not last. You will be above only and not beneath. In other words, you will be a leader, and you will lead. If you do not obey His commandments the reverse will happen, you will always be beneath, and you will always be the last. People will follow your lead, and they will respect you when you act righteously. Even the highest in society will honor you.

If you sin, even those who are meant to be under your rule will rebel against you. Look at how people are rebelling in the nations where leaders practice tyranny and other practices that go against God's law. Even those whom you consider the least in society will oppose you. Proverbs 14:34 (KJV) - "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Joash was buried in Jerusalem, but notably, he was not buried in the tombs of the kings, a sign of his dishonorable end (2 Chronicles 24:25). His end was dishonorable because he died while exalting sin. King Joash, whose name means "Yahweh has given", had a reign that started with great promise and faithfulness but ended in tragedy due to his later rejection of God.

Under the guidance of Jehoiada the priest, Joash restored the temple and initiated religious reforms. But after Jehoiada's death, Joash turned away from God, leading to the nation's spiritual decline and his own downfall. He reigned for 40 years (2 Kings 12:1) but was assassinated due to the betrayal of those who had saved him. His story highlights the importance of staying faithful to God throughout one's life, not just in the beginning.

Jehoiada

Jehoiada (יְהוֹיָדָע) in Hebrew means "Yahweh knows" or "God knows." Jehoiada was not a king but a high priest in Judah during the reigns of Kings Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash. He is most well-known for his role in overthrowing the wicked Queen Athaliah and restoring the young Joash to the throne. Jehoiada was a pivotal figure in the preservation of the Davidic line, as Athaliah had attempted to destroy all royal heirs. He hid Joash, the rightful heir, in the temple for six years (2 Chronicles 22:11).

Jehoiada's wife was Jehosheba (or Jehoshabeath), the daughter of King Jehoram of Judah and the sister of King Ahaziah. She played a crucial role in saving Joash by hiding him from Athaliah.

Jehoiada's son was Zechariah, who was also a prophet. Tragically, after Jehoiada's death, King Joash turned away from God, and Zechariah was later stoned to death by the people under Joash's orders (2 Chronicles 24:20-22).

After Athaliah's overthrow, Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people that they should be the Lord's people, and he led in the restoration of proper worship of Yahweh (2 Kings 11:17-18). Jehoiada was deeply influential during King Joash's reign, guiding the young king in his early years to follow God and oversee the repair of the temple (2 Kings 12:2, 2 Chronicles 24:2).

Jehoiada lived to the age of 130 years, an exceptionally long life. Upon his death, he was honored by being buried among the kings in the City of David because of the great service he had done for God and for the people of Judah (2 Chronicles 24:15-16). When he lived, he never knew that he was going to be buried among kings. Faith in God made him to be buried among kings. Jehoiada's legacy is one of faithfulness, wisdom, and leadership, guiding Judah through a critical period of its history. By faith, Jehoiada obtained a good report.

King Amaziah

The name Amaziah (Hebrew: אֲמַצְיָה, Amatsyah) means "Yahweh is mighty" or "The Lord is mighty". This reflects a recognition of God's strength and power, which is significant given Amaziah's mixed record in his reign.

Amaziah was the ninth king of Judah. His reign was marked by a mix of religious reforms, military successes, and eventual decline. He is remembered for his initial faithfulness and his struggles with neighboring kingdoms.

Amaziah was the son of King Joash (Jehoash) and Zibiah of Beersheba. His father Joash had a tumultuous reign, ending in assassination, which was a precursor to Amaziah's own challenges (2 Kings 14:1; 2 Chronicles 25:1).

Amaziah became king at the age of 25 and ruled for 29 years (2 Kings 14:2; 2 Chronicles 25:1).

Initial Faithfulness to God

2 Kings 14:3 (KJ21) - "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father; he did according to all things as Joash his father did."

2 Chronicles 25:2 (KJ21) - "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart."

Amaziah is noted for his initial faithfulness to God. He began his reign by following the ways of the Lord, as his father Joash had done earlier in his life. However, his commitment was somewhat inconsistent (2 Kings 14:3; 2 Chronicles 25:2). He was not as excellent in righteousness as David

(one of the kings in his lineage) was. His reign was partly righteous and partly evil just like the reign of his father Joash. This is a common trait among many great Christian men and women.

Many Christian leaders and influencers start with God, but they leave God once they reach the heights of greatness. Once they are down, they feel that they need God. Therefore, they seek Him diligently so that He can lift them up. Since God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), He exalts them. Once they get exalted, they feel that they are in such a high place that they need nobody's help.

Therefore, they have no room for God because their wealth and power make them believe that they can sustain themselves. We are dependent on God all the time, whether one is great or lowly, or a king or a servant. Everybody is dependent on God. If we were dependent on ourselves, everybody would make themselves immortal.

One of King Amaziah's early acts as king was to execute the murderers of his father Joash, ensuring justice for the previous king's assassination (2 Kings 14:5; 2 Chronicles 25:3-4).

Military Campaigns and Achievements

2 Kings 14:7 (KJ21) - "He slew ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and took Sela by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day."

Amaziah was known for his military prowess. He defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, killing 10,000 of them and capturing Sela (also known as Petra), which he renamed Joktheel (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11-12).

Sela is a Hebrew word meaning "rock." It refers to a fortified city in Edom, often identified with the city of Petra in modern Jordan, which was a stronghold located in the rocky cliffs. Petra is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sela. Petra was an ancient city located in modern-day Jordan, famous for its rock-cut architecture and being a strategic stronghold. Thus, Petra and Sela refer to the same city in the Bible, with the Hebrew name Sela later translated into the Greek Petra, both meaning "rock."

Joktheel (Hebrew: יָקְתְאֵל, Yoqte'el) means "God's subdued" or "God's obedience" This name comes from the Hebrew root "yakath," meaning "to subdue," combined with "El," a common reference to God. The name suggests that the city was subdued or conquered by God's power.

King Amaziah changed the name of the place from Sela to Joktheel. Sela means rock. A rock usually symbolizes the firmness or the strength of something. He gave it a better name, Joktheel which means “God subdued.” The former meaning of the city’s name and the new meaning given by Amaziah symbolize that God subdues the most difficult things.

Amaziah did this act to honor God and to acknowledge that it was God who gave them power to conquer the city. It is better to go the extra mile to show that you acknowledge your dependence on God through your actions, not just your words. Words can be cheap because many people are used to saying things that they do not mean. However, when you accompany your words with actions, your words will be more grounded since they would have evidence.

Psalm 33:9 (KJ21) says, "For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." God never speaks empty words. Whatever He says, it gets done. His words are always accompanied by actions. In Genesis 1 in the story of creation we can see that whatever God calls into existence, it comes into existence.

John 1:14 (KJ21) - "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." The Word was made flesh (it was made a seen reality) and dwelt among men. If you want to see the evidence of the Word of God in your life, obey it.

The name that Amaziah gave to the place stuck more than the previous name. Involving God actively in something gives that thing permanence. The Bible says that the place is called Joktheel to this day. God is eternal. Thus, whatever He touches automatically becomes eternal. Why don’t you experiment with this truth by allowing Him to touch your life?

We all know the Apostle Paul. He was once called Saul but the new name he was given, Paul, stuck more than the name Saul. His work after salvation is cherished and more remembered than his past life of sin. When God works in you no matter how terrible of a sinner you are, your righteousness will be more remembered than your former sinful life. The new identity He has given you will be remembered more than the past identity that the Devil had covered you with.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) - "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Following Amaziah's victory, he challenged King Jehoash of Israel to a battle. This was a mistake as it led to a confrontation between Judah and Israel. He probably did that because he was feeling the thrill of winning. He felt that since he won ten thousand Edomites in the valley of Salt, he would defeat the Israelites as well.

When the story of Amaziah starts we are told that he did what was right in God's sight but not to the level of his father David. David was a king who conquered the greatest battles, but he was humble. He did not fight every individual who confronted him. Sometimes he would run away. Before fighting a battle, he would seek God's approval to allow him to fight that battle. Amaziah challenged the Israelites to battle with Judah because of pride.

The Israelites under King Jehoash were evil (just like the Edomites) and Jehoash too did not lead the kingdom to righteousness. The Israelites were practicing idolatry, and Jehoash brought no spiritual reform. Thus, any carnal mind would think because God had allowed Judah to smite the Edomites because of their evil deeds, He would also allow them to smite Israel because of their evil deeds. It is not good to assume what God wants. Instead of assuming, you should ask Him.

Amaziah's challenge to Jehoash of Israel resulted in a decisive defeat for Judah. Jehoash defeated Amaziah's army and even breached the walls of Jerusalem, taking significant spoils back to Samaria (2 Kings 14:8-14; 2 Chronicles 25:17-24).

After this defeat, Amaziah's reign faced significant problems. The defeat weakened his position, and he was eventually assassinated by his own servants (2 Kings 14:19-20; 2 Chronicles 25:27). His assassination marked a turbulent end to his reign.

Legacy and Succession

After his death, Amaziah was succeeded by his son Uzziah (Azariah), who was 16 years old at the time (2 Kings 15:1-2; 2 Chronicles 26:1).

Amaziah's story illustrates the importance of remaining consistently faithful to God, as his initial faithfulness was overshadowed by his later failures and lack of trust in God's guidance.

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King Amaziah, whose name means "Yahweh is mighty," began his reign with promise and faithfulness to God but faced challenges due to his military overreach and political missteps. His reign included notable victories, especially over Edom, but his challenge to Israel led to significant losses and his own downfall. His story is a reminder of the importance of maintaining faithfulness and wisdom in leadership. When Amaziah showed faith in God, he gained a good reputation, when he did not he gained no good reputation.

King Uzziah (also known as Azariah)

Uzziah (עֻזִּיָּה) in Hebrew means "Yahweh is my strength" or "God is my strength."

King Uzziah, also known as Azariah in some Bible passages, was a king of Judah. He began his reign at the young age of sixteen, after his father, Amaziah, was killed. His reign lasted for fifty-two years (around 792–740 BC), making it one of the longest in Judah's history (2 Chronicles 26:1-3, 2 Kings 15:1-3).

King Uzziah's father was Amaziah, who was also a king of Judah. Amaziah was generally faithful to God but later turned away from Him, leading to his assassination. His mother was Jecoliah (2 Chronicles 26:3). His son was Jotham, who succeeded Uzziah as king and is remembered for continuing his father's military and building projects.

Uzziah is remembered for being a strong and capable ruler who led Judah into a period of prosperity and military success. Under his leadership, Judah expanded its territory, strengthened its fortifications, and developed agriculture and commerce (2 Chronicles 26:6-10). His success was attributed to his faithfulness to God in the early part of his reign, as he "sought God in the days of Zechariah" (2 Chronicles 26:5).

As long as Uzziah followed the Lord, he prospered. As long as you follow God, prosperity is assured. You should not follow God because of prosperity. You should follow God because of who He is. Prosperity and exaltation are the effects or rather the fruits that come with faithfully following God.

Uzziah led military campaigns against the Philistines, Arabs, and Ammonites, and he built towers in Jerusalem for defense. He strengthened the army and equipped them with advanced military

tools, including specially designed machines for shooting arrows and large stones (2 Chronicles 26:14-15). He also promoted agriculture and improved the nation's infrastructure, reflecting his leadership skills in both domestic and military matters.

Later in his reign, Uzziah became prideful due to his success, which led to his downfall. In an act of disobedience, Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense on the altar, a duty reserved only for the priests (2 Chronicles 26:16-18). No matter how high you go in life, stick to the duties that God has given you and do not do what He has forbidden you to do. As a result of disobedience, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he remained a leper until the end of his life. He lived in isolation while his son Jotham governed in his place (2 Chronicles 26:19-21).

King Uzziah died in around 740 BC after reigning for fifty-two years. Although the Bible does not specify his exact age at death, since he began his reign at sixteen, it is likely that he lived into his late sixties or early seventies.

Uzziah is often remembered for both his achievements and his tragic end. His reign brought prosperity to Judah, but his pride led to his downfall, serving as a reminder of the dangers of pride and disobedience to God. His story is told in 2 Chronicles 26 and 2 Kings 15:1-7. Like his father, Uzziah started his reign with God but did not end with God.

We should be careful of generational patterns and curses so that we do not fall into the same sins that our fathers and forefathers fell into. Fast and pray against these patterns. There are some families which have a history of drunkenness, some families have a history of adultery, some have a history of siring children outside marriage, some have a history of witchcraft while some have a history of not completing projects.

Take time to learn more about your family, tribe and nation. Look at the common negative aspects that are in them and pray against them. Uzziah obtained a good reputation when he had faith in God and a terrible reputation when he had doubt.

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King Jotham

The name Jotham (Hebrew: יוֹתָם, Yotam) means "Yahweh is perfect" or "The Lord is upright". It reflects a sense of righteousness and a connection to God's perfect ways, which aligns with Jotham's largely faithful reign.

Jotham was the eleventh king of Judah, succeeding his father Uzziah (also known as Azariah). His reign is notable for his faithfulness to God, his strong leadership, and the improvements he made to Judah's infrastructure. Though his reign was overshadowed by the negative actions of the people, Jotham is remembered for his personal commitment to God.

Jotham was the son of King Uzziah and Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok (2 Kings 15:32-33; 2 Chronicles 27:1). Uzziah, Jotham's father, was a long-reigning and successful king, but he was struck with leprosy after attempting to burn incense in the temple, a role reserved for priests. Because of his condition, Uzziah was isolated, and Jotham ruled as co-regent during this time (2 Chronicles 26:21). Jotham officially became king of Judah after the death of his father, Uzziah, and reigned for 16 years (2 Kings 15:33; 2 Chronicles 27:1).

Jotham's Faithfulness to God

2 Chronicles 27:2 (KJ21) - "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah did; however, he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly."

Jotham is described as a righteous king who followed the ways of his father, Uzziah, but did not repeat Uzziah's mistake of usurping the role of the priests (2 Chronicles 27:2). He is noted for doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 15:34). Learn from the mistakes and experiences of those who are older than you, not just your parents, so that you do not repeat the same mistakes.

If your parents are still alive, spend time with them and ask them as many questions as you can regarding their lives. Ask them for life advice. Do the same with your uncles, aunties, cousins, grandparents and all other relatives. Do not fear appearing too inquisitive. You would rather ask someone a question and they fail to answer or dismiss it as a stupid question than fail to ask. The

pride in our hearts is what makes us avoid asking questions because we are afraid of looking foolish. Humility is acknowledging that you are a fool (in the context that there is a lot you do not know).

Once you acknowledge your insufficiency in knowledge, you will be willing to seek more knowledge, and you will be better in life than you were before. You do not have to learn from your own experience. You can learn from other people's experiences. Study various people's facets of life, for instance their spiritual life, their financial life, their social life, their family life etc.

Take a keen look at the mistakes and the consequences sin has brought them and ensure that you do not fall into the same pitfalls. Embrace whatever good and noble thing that they have done but do not embrace the evil things. Treat your role models with the same respect. Some people want to copy everything that their role models are doing. That is dangerous because you are two different people with two different lives.

If you have Jesus as your role model, you can copy everything that He did. However, if you have human beings as your role models, you need to be careful, no matter how holy they appear. The Bible records King Uzziah to have made one mistake despite living righteously. That mistake was entering into God's temple and burning incense. In 2 Chronicles 27:2, King Jotham is recorded to have lived righteously like his father King Uzziah but did not repeat the same mistake of going to the temple to burn incense as his father did.

We are also told in 2 Chronicles 27:2 that despite him being righteous, the people still acted corruptly. Sometimes, you can be a righteous leader, but people fail to act righteously. For example, God is the most righteous leader, but the majority of the world still acts corruptly. This does not mean you stop leading righteously. Keep on leading righteously in that position that God has given you for the time that God has kept you there.

We can also see that Jotham was not a dictator. He did not force the people to act righteously. Dictatorship is ungodly. Do not force people to believe in what you believe in. Instead, influence them. The best way to influence them is through your example.

2 Chronicles 27:6 (NLT) - "King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to live in obedience to the Lord his God."

In 2 Chronicles 27:6 we are told that Jotham became powerful because he was careful to live in obedience to the Lord his God. Obedience to God gave Jotham power. When you live a life of obedience to God, you will increase in power in all aspects of your life. The Word that God calls you to obey has infinite power. Obeying God's Word is inviting power into your life.

A cell phone cannot stay on forever without being charged. When you use it for some time the charge runs out and you need to charge it again. Having a phone with no charge is like having a powerless phone, thus it is considered useless. The same principle applies to our lives. We cannot live powerfully and effectively without studying and applying God's Word.

Jotham not only lived in obedience to God's Word, but he was also careful to live in obedience to God's Word. The Bible uses the phrase, "he was careful," meaning he looked at even the tiniest details to ensure he does not go astray from God's Word.

Construction and Infrastructure Improvements

Jotham was a builder and reformer who focused on strengthening Judah's defenses and infrastructure. He undertook several important construction projects that fortified the kingdom:

He rebuilt the upper gate of the Lord's temple, indicating his concern for the temple and religious worship (2 Kings 15:35; 2 Chronicles 27:3).

2 Chronicles 27:3 (AMP) - "[3] It was Jotham who built the Upper Gate of the house of the Lord, and he built extensively on the wall of Ophel. [4] Moreover, he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the forests, he built fortresses and towers."

He also built extensively on the wall of Ophel and constructed towns, fortresses, and towers in Judah (2 Chronicles 27:3-4). These projects bolstered the kingdom's security and infrastructure.

Why did Jotham build extensively on the wall of Ophel than in other areas?

Jotham's extensive building of the wall of Ophel, as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 27:3, likely had both practical and symbolic reasons:

1. **Defense and Security:** The wall of Ophel was part of the fortifications of Jerusalem. Ophel was a hill located between the City of David and the Temple Mount, an area of strategic

importance. Strengthening the walls would enhance the city's defense, protecting it from potential invaders. Jotham likely saw the need to fortify this area as part of his efforts to secure the kingdom.

2. **Strengthening the Nation:** During Jotham's reign, there were ongoing threats from neighboring nations. Fortifying the walls of Jerusalem, particularly near the Temple and in areas of religious significance, would have been important for maintaining the kingdom's strength and stability.
3. **Religious Symbolism:** Ophel was close to the Temple, and improving the fortifications around such a sacred area could symbolize Jotham's commitment to protecting the spiritual center of the nation. His dedication to maintaining the religious heart of Israel could also reflect his reverence for the Lord.

Military Campaigns and Success

Jotham had military success during his reign. He fought against the Ammonites, who had been hostile to Judah, and subdued them. As a result, the Ammonites paid him a significant tribute for three years: 100 talents of silver, 10,000 measures of wheat, and 10,000 measures of barley each year (2 Chronicles 27:5). When you have God on your side, you are automatically the light of the world. Being light in a world that is filled with darkness means that you are unique.

When you are peculiar, people who are lost in darkness will need you to shine light into their lives. If you are in business, they will always need your products and services. If you are looking for a job, employers will always need you to omit the darkness in their organizations. When you are light, your demand will be extremely high, and people will be willing to pay you hefty amounts to get some of that light.

The power of God made Jotham to fight against the Ammonites and defeat them. As a result, the ammonites paid him with huge material goods every year. You may find that he did not even ask for them, they just chose to pay him. God can work in people to pay you more than you expected without even asking anything from them.

Genesis 14:22-23 (KJ21) - "[22] And Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, [23] That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.'"

The king of Sodom offered Abraham the spoils of war following Abraham's victory over the kings who had captured Lot. The king of Sodom requested Abraham to return the people but keep the goods taken during the battle. Abraham refused to take anything from the king of Sodom after the king of Sodom offered him all those great possessions.

In Genesis 13:2, we are told that Abraham was extraordinarily rich materially. Abraham did not want the king of Sodom to take credit for his riches. Secondly, he probably felt that what he had was more than enough, he did not need to take anything more. God says in Malachi 3:10 that He will open the flood gates of heaven so that you will have no room to receive the blessing He is going to give you. Abraham had great material wealth in Genesis 13:2 that he did not need any more from an unbeliever in Genesis 14:22-23.

Monarchs like the Queen of Sheba used to visit King Solomon and give costly material goods to him in exchange for a piece of the wisdom that God had given to him. Pharaoh elevated Joseph from a prisoner to the second highest person in Egypt (after him) because of the simple gift of dream interpretation that God had given him.

Pharaoh also wanted a strategy from Joseph on how to endure the famine that was going to fall upon them and effective measures on how to manage it. God worked through Joseph even when he was exalted. Because of Joseph, Egypt was prosperous even during the famine season that other nations would come to borrow and buy from it.

King Nebuchadnezzar exalted Daniel because of his God given ability to interpret a dream. By extension, he ended up exalting Daniel’s friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. King Belshazzar gave Daniel great gifts immediately after he had told him the painful truth concerning the writings on the wall. The ability to interpret those writings was given to him by God. King Darius made Daniel a president and exalted him above all the others because of the excellent character and work ethic thar was cultivated in him by God.

From the example of Solomon, Joseph, and Jotham, we can see that there is need for nations to have genuine Christian leaders. Leaders who will lead the nation in righteousness because righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). If we have such leaders, our countries will never be poor. We will be the lenders only and we will not borrow (Deuteronomy 28:12). People will invest and give grants to our countries in exchange for the light that the top leaders are illuminating in the world.

When you are a righteous individual, you will always be needed. People will go to great lengths to give you great gifts to receive a little bit of the light that God has instilled in you and on you. This does not mean that the light that God has given us is meant for trade. It means that God will always provide for you, many times and often, He will do it through people. When you bless others, God takes account, and He will never fail to repay you. It might not always be immediate, but He will always repay you.

King Jotham's military achievements contributed to his strength and the prosperity of Judah during his reign.

Jotham's Death and Legacy

Jotham's reign is summarized positively, particularly regarding his personal faithfulness to God. The books of Kings and Chronicles both commend him for his righteous rule, even though the people of Judah did not fully follow his example (2 Kings 15:34-35; 2 Chronicles 27:2).

After reigning for 16 years, Jotham died and was buried in the City of David (2 Kings 15:38; 2 Chronicles 27:9). He was succeeded by his son, Ahaz, who, unfortunately, did not follow in his father's righteous footsteps and led Judah into idolatry and further decline (2 Kings 15:38; 16:1-4).

King Jotham, whose name means "Yahweh is perfect", ruled Judah with a heart devoted to God. He is remembered for his personal faithfulness, his efforts to fortify Judah's defenses, and his military successes.

Despite Jotham's righteousness, the people of Judah did not fully abandon their corrupt practices, highlighting the challenges he faced during his reign. Jotham ruled for 16 years and left a positive

legacy of obedience to God, though his son Ahaz did not continue in his footsteps. By faith, King Jotham obtained a good reputation.

King Cyrus the Great (Persian king)

The name Cyrus (Greek: Κῦρος, Kuros; Persian: Khur, meaning "sun" or "throne") is often associated with the concept of a leader or king, and it reflects majesty and divine favor.

Cyrus the Great was the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, also known as the First Persian Empire. His reign marked a significant period in ancient history due to his military conquests, administrative reforms, and the release of Jewish captives. He is known for his impressive achievements and notable impact on the biblical narrative.

Cyrus II, commonly known as Cyrus the Great, was the son of Cambyses I and Manda. He was born around 600–576 BC (precise dates vary by source). He ascended to the throne of Persia after overthrowing his grandfather Astyages of the Median Empire, thereby uniting the Persian and Median kingdoms into a powerful empire (circa 550 BC).

Military Conquests and Empire Building

Cyrus the Great expanded his empire through a series of successful military campaigns. His conquests included:

Lydia (in modern-day Türkiye) in 546 BC. The Neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 BC, which included the capture of Babylon itself. This conquest was significant in allowing Cyrus to become the ruler of a vast empire stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indus River.

Religious Tolerance and Administration

Cyrus is known for his policy of religious tolerance and respect towards the cultures and religions of the lands he conquered. This policy included allowing local customs and religions to be

practiced freely. His approach to governance was marked by effective administrative reforms that allowed him to manage a vast and diverse empire efficiently.

The Release of the Jewish Exiles

One of Cyrus's most notable acts in biblical history was his decree allowing the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

This event is described in several biblical texts:

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (KJ21) - "[22] Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the Word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying, [23] Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up."

Ezra 1:1-4 (KJ21) - "[1] Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying, [2] "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: 'The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. [3] Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. [4] And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold, and with goods and with beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.'"

Death and Legacy

Cyrus the Great died around 530 BC. After his death, his empire was ruled by his successors, including his son Cambyses II and later Darius I.

He is remembered as a wise and visionary ruler whose policies of tolerance and respect for local customs and religions earned him a favorable place in history. His legacy is also reflected in the Cyrus Cylinder, an artifact that celebrates his achievements and policies of benevolence. Cyrus might not have been a believer in God but the little good acts of faith which he did gave him a good reputation.

John the Baptist

The name John (Hebrew: יוֹחָנָן, Yochanan; Greek: Ἰωάννης, Ioannes) means "Yahweh is gracious" or "The Lord is gracious". This reflects a theme of divine favor and kindness, which is fitting for John the Baptist's role in preparing the way for Jesus.

John the Baptist was a significant figure in the New Testament, known for his role in heralding the coming of Jesus Christ and his distinctive lifestyle and ministry. John the Baptist was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth, his mother, was a relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36). The two women were both descendants of Aaron, highlighting their priestly lineage.

John's birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel to his father Zechariah, who was a priest (Luke 1:5-25). John's birth was considered miraculous because Elizabeth was advanced in age and had been barren (Luke 1:7, 13-14).

Ministry and Role

John the Baptist began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, calling people to repentance and baptizing them as a sign of their commitment to God (Matthew 3:1-2; Mark 1:4). His baptism was a symbol of spiritual cleansing and preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 3:6). John's message was one of preparation for the coming of Jesus, whom he identified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He baptized Jesus himself in the Jordan River, marking the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11).

Distinctive Lifestyle

John led a life of asceticism, living in the wilderness and wearing clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6). His diet consisted of locusts and wild honey, which underscored his separation from the comforts of society (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6).

Conflict with Herod

John confronted Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, for his unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. This bold action led to his imprisonment (Matthew 14:3-4; Mark 6:17-18). While imprisoned, John sent messengers to Jesus to confirm whether He was the expected Messiah (Luke 7:18-19). Jesus reassured him by pointing to His miracles and fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 7:20-23).

Martyrdom

John the Baptist was eventually executed by beheading at the request of Herodias' daughter, Salome, who danced before Herod Antipas and asked for John's head on a platter (Matthew 14:6-11; Mark 6:21-28). His martyrdom is seen as a testament to his unwavering commitment to his prophetic mission and his courage in standing for truth.

Legacy and Influence

John the Baptist is regarded as the last of the Old Testament prophets and the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He is celebrated for his role in preparing the way for Jesus and his dedication to his mission. Jesus Himself praised John, saying that among those born of women, there was none greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28).

John the Baptist, whose name means "Yahweh is gracious", played a pivotal role in the New Testament as the forerunner of Jesus Christ. His life and ministry were marked by his call to repentance, his ascetic lifestyle, and his bold confrontation with Herod. His baptism of Jesus signified the start of Jesus' ministry, and his eventual martyrdom highlighted his dedication and

courage. John's legacy continues to be honored as a key figure in the Christian faith. By faith, John the Baptist obtained a good report.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Mary is honored for her unwavering faith in God's plan, despite the challenges and societal pressures she faced. When the angel Gabriel announced that she would conceive Jesus through the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with humble obedience, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38 KJ21).

Mary's faith in God's promise and her role as the mother of the Messiah solidified her reputation as a woman of great faith. Mary was a virgin. She did not know that she was going to give birth to God (Jesus), she was simply obeying God's commandments by preserving herself. God gave her an unexpected blessing by giving her the privilege to give birth to Jesus. By faith, Mary obtained a good reputation.

The Roman Centurion

In Matthew 8:5-13, a Roman centurion is commended by Jesus for his extraordinary faith. He believed that Jesus could heal his servant by uttering a word, without needing to come to his home. Jesus marveled at the centurion's faith, saying, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:10 KJ21). This man's faith earned him a place in the Bible as an example of belief in God's authority. He was not a Jew, but his faith made him to obtain a good reputation.

The Woman with the Issue of Blood

This woman, who had suffered from a bleeding condition for twelve years, demonstrated remarkable faith by believing that merely touching Jesus' garment would heal her. Despite the crowd, she reached out and touched the hem of His garment, and Jesus responded, "Daughter, be

of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matthew 9:22 KJ21). Her faith was rewarded with healing. Thus, she obtained a good reputation.

The Syrophoenician Woman

In Matthew 15:21-28, a Syrophoenician woman approached Jesus, pleading for the healing of her demon-possessed daughter. Though initially tested by Jesus, she persisted in her faith, and Jesus acknowledged her great faith, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28 KJ21). Her faith led to her daughter's healing and earned her recognition as a woman of profound faith.

The Apostle Paul

Paul, originally a persecutor of Christians, became one of the most influential apostles through his deep faith in Christ. His missionary journeys, numerous letters to the early churches, and willingness to suffer for the gospel made him a pillar of the New Testament church. Paul wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7 KJ21), exemplifying his enduring faith. He wrote around half of the books of the New Testament which are read to this day. By faith, Paul obtained a good reputation.

Stephen

Stephen was a man "full of faith and power" (Acts 6:8 KJ21) who performed great wonders and signs among the people. His bold proclamation of the gospel led to his martyrdom, but even in his final moments, he demonstrated unwavering faith, praying for his persecutors as he was stoned to death. His faith and courage earned him a lasting reputation as the first Christian martyr and a man of strong conviction.

The Apostle Peter

Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, is known for his faith, despite moments of doubt. When Jesus walked on water, Peter's faith led him to step out of the boat and walk toward Him. Though he faltered when he became afraid, his initial act of faith is remarkable (Matthew 14:28-31 KJ21).

Peter fell into sin various times, when he was with Jesus and even after Jesus ascended back to heaven. However, he did not stay down permanently, feeling hopeless. Every time he fell, he rose up quickly. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter became a powerful leader in the early church, boldly preaching the gospel and even healing the sick, solidifying his reputation as a man of faith. He wrote two books in the Bible, 1st and 2nd Peter. Numerous Bible scholars say that he had a low level of education, but his faith earned him a good reputation.

The Apostle John

John, often referred to as the "beloved disciple," was known for his deep faith and love for Jesus. He was one of the first disciples to believe in the resurrection of Jesus after seeing the empty tomb (John 20:8 KJ21). John's faith is further evidenced by his writings, including the Gospel of John, his epistles, and the Book of Revelation. His faith and insight into the divine nature of Jesus earned him a lasting reputation as a key figure in the Bible.

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

In John 4:1-42, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and reveals to her that He is the Messiah. Despite her past and the social barriers between Jews and Samaritans, she believed in Him and immediately shared the news with her community. Her faith led many Samaritans to believe in Jesus, and she is remembered as a woman whose faith had a profound impact on her town. Despite her terrible past, her faith earned her a good reputation.

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, demonstrated his faith when he climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus as He passed by. His eagerness to see Jesus and his subsequent repentance led to Jesus visiting his home. Zacchaeus vowed to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay those he had wronged fourfold. Jesus declared, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9 KJ21). Zacchaeus' faith led to his transformation and a good reputation as a repentant believer.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene is renowned for her deep devotion and faith in Jesus. After being healed by Him, she became one of His most faithful followers. She was present at the crucifixion and was the first to witness the resurrected Christ, and was entrusted with the message of His resurrection to the apostles (John 20:11-18 KJ21). Her faithfulness earned her a revered place in Christian history and a good reputation.

The Apostle Thomas

Thomas, often remembered as "Doubting Thomas," eventually gained a good reputation for his faith. After initially doubting Jesus' resurrection, he proclaimed, "My Lord and my God" when Jesus appeared to him (John 20:28 KJ21). His subsequent missionary work, particularly in India, where he is believed to have spread the gospel, demonstrates his strong faith and commitment to Christ.

Lydia the Businesswoman

Lydia was a businesswoman in Philippi who worshiped God and became the first recorded European convert to Christianity. When Paul preached, the Lord opened her heart to respond to the message, and she and her household were baptized (Acts 16:14-15 KJ21). Her faith led to the

establishment of the church in Philippi, and she is remembered as a hospitable and faithful believer. By faith, she obtained a good reputation.

The Philippian Jailer

In Acts 16:25-34, a jailer in Philippi came to faith after witnessing Paul and Silas miraculously freed from prison by an earthquake. Believing their message, he and his entire household were baptized. His faith not only saved him but also established him as a respected member of the early Christian community. His act of simply believing in Jesus is read to this day. His faith made him obtain a good reputation.

Barnabas

Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement," was a close companion of Paul and a key figure in the early church. He demonstrated faith by selling his land and giving the proceeds to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37 KJ21). He also showed faith in Paul’s conversion when others were skeptical, bringing him to the apostles and vouching for his sincerity (Acts 9:26-27 KJ21). Barnabas' faith and generosity earned him a lasting reputation as an encourager and a man of faith.

Cornelius the Centurion

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, is noted for his faith and devotion to God. Although he was a Gentile, he feared God, prayed regularly, and gave generously to those in need. His faith was rewarded when an angel instructed him to send for Peter, who then preached the gospel to him and his household, leading to their conversion and baptism (Acts 10:1-48 KJ21). Cornelius' faith made him one of the first Gentile converts to Christianity. Thus, he obtained a good reputation by faith.

Priscilla and Aquila

This husband-and-wife team demonstrated their faith through their hospitality, teaching, and support of Paul's ministry. They are particularly known for instructing Apollos, a knowledgeable preacher, and explaining "the way of God more perfectly" to him (Acts 18:26 KJ21). Their faith and partnership in ministry earned them a good reputation in the early church.

Timothy

Timothy, a young disciple mentored by Paul, is known for his sincere faith, which Paul praises in his letters (2 Timothy 1:5 KJ21). Timothy's faith, nurtured by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, led him to become a trusted leader in the early church. He was often sent by Paul to strengthen and encourage believers in various congregations.

The Canaanite Woman

This unnamed Canaanite woman approached Jesus, pleading for her daughter to be healed. Despite being initially dismissed, her persistent faith moved Jesus to commend her: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28 KJ21). Her faith led to her daughter's healing and earned her a good reputation and recognition as a model of persistent belief.

Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy and respected member of the Sanhedrin, demonstrated his faith by boldly asking Pilate for Jesus' body after the crucifixion. He provided a tomb for Jesus' burial (Luke 23:50-53 KJ21). His faith in Jesus and his actions during a critical moment earned him a good reputation among the early Christians.

Martha

Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, is known for her faith in Jesus, even in the face of her brother's death. When Jesus arrived after Lazarus had died, Martha expressed her belief that Jesus could still act, saying, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee" (John 11:22 KJ21). Her faith was rewarded when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and she is remembered as a woman of practical faith. Through faith, she obtained a good reputation.

Mary of Bethany

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, demonstrated her deep faith and love for Jesus when she anointed His feet with expensive perfume and wiped them with her hair. This act of devotion, despite criticism from others, was highly praised by Jesus, who said, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matthew 26:13 KJ21). Mary’s faith and worshipful spirit earned her a good reputation.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

The Ethiopian eunuch, a high official under the Queen of Ethiopia, demonstrated his faith when he sought to understand the Scriptures. When Philip explained the prophecy in Isaiah and preached about Jesus, the eunuch immediately believed and asked to be baptized (Acts 8:26-38 KJ21). His faith and eagerness to embrace the gospel earned him a noble reputation as one of the first Gentile converts to Christianity.

Ananias of Damascus

Ananias, a disciple in Damascus, showed great faith when he obeyed the Lord's command to go to Saul (later Paul) and restore his sight. Despite knowing Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians, Ananias faithfully followed God's direction, calling Saul "Brother Saul" and laying

hands on him, leading to Saul's conversion (Acts 9:10-18 KJ21). Ananias' faith and obedience played a crucial role in the transformation of one of the Bible's most important figures.

Tabitha (Dorcas)

Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, was a disciple known for her good works and acts of charity, particularly in helping the poor. When she fell ill and died, the believers in Joppa sent for Peter, who prayed and raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36-42 KJ21). Her faith and charitable deeds earned her a lasting reputation as a beloved and faithful disciple.

Silas

Silas, also known as Silvanus, was a leader in the early church. He demonstrated his faith by accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys. He endured persecution, imprisonment, and hardships while spreading the gospel. While imprisoned with Paul in Philippi, Silas prayed and sang hymns, leading to a miraculous earthquake that freed them (Acts 16:25-26 KJ21). Silas' faith and resilience made him a respected figure.

Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus was a fellow worker and messenger for Paul, who risked his life to bring aid to Paul while he was imprisoned. Despite falling gravely ill, he continued in his mission, demonstrating great faith and dedication. Paul commended him highly, saying, "Hold such in reputation" (Philippians 2:25-30 KJ21). Epaphroditus' faithfulness and willingness to serve under difficult circumstances earned him a good reputation.

The Widow with Two Mites

In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus commends a poor widow who, in her faith, gave all she had—two small coins—into the temple treasury. Jesus said, "This poor widow hath cast more in than all they which

have cast into the treasury" (Mark 12:43 KJ21). Her sacrificial giving, rooted in faith, earned her a lasting reputation as an example of true generosity and trust in God.

The Man Born Blind

In John 9, Jesus heals a man who was born blind. The man's faith is evident when he stands up to the Pharisees who question him about Jesus. He boldly declares, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25 KJ21). Despite pressure and threats, he maintained his testimony about Jesus, ultimately declaring, "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing" (John 9:33 KJ21). His faith and courage in Jesus, even under pressure, earned him a good reputation, and his story has become a powerful testimony of spiritual and physical sight.

The Penitent Thief on the Cross

One of the thieves crucified alongside Jesus showed remarkable faith in his final moments. Recognizing Jesus' innocence and kingship, he said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42 KJ21). Jesus responded, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43 KJ21). The thief's faith, even in his dying moments, secured him a place in paradise and a lasting reputation as an example of repentance and belief.

The Early Christians

The believers in the early church demonstrated their faith by devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Their communal lifestyle, marked by sharing possessions and caring for one another, earned them favor with all the people. Acts 2:47 (KJ21) states, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The early Christians' faith and unity were foundational to the spread of Christianity and left a lasting legacy.

Gaius

Gaius is commended in 3 John for his faithfulness and hospitality to traveling teachers and missionaries. John writes, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers" (3 John 1:5 KJ21). Gaius' generosity and support of the gospel earned him a good reputation.

Onesimus

Onesimus, a runaway slave who became a believer, is commended by Paul in the letter to Philemon. After meeting Paul in prison, Onesimus' faith and transformation led Paul to refer to him as "my son" and "a beloved brother" (Philemon 1:10-16 KJ21). His faith and changed life earned him a new identity and a positive reputation.

The Seven Deacons

Seven men, including Stephen and Philip, were chosen to serve as deacons in the early church due to their good reputation, being "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3 KJ21). Their faith and service ensured the well-being of the church and allowed the apostles to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. Their role was crucial in the growth and unity of the early church.

Philip the Evangelist

Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen in Acts 6, demonstrated great faith in his evangelistic efforts. He preached the gospel in Samaria with such power that many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:5-12 KJ21). Later, he was led by the Holy Spirit to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, whom he baptized after explaining the Scriptures to him (Acts 8:26-39 KJ21). Philip's faithfulness in spreading the gospel earned him the title of "the Evangelist" and a lasting reputation as a dedicated servant of Christ.

Andrew the Apostle

Andrew, the brother of Peter, is known for his faith in bringing people to Jesus. He was the first to follow Jesus and then brought his brother Peter to Him (John 1:40-42 KJ21). Andrew also demonstrated faith when he brought the boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus, trusting that Jesus could do something with it (John 6:8-9 KJ21). His faith in Jesus' ability to work miracles and his eagerness to introduce others to Christ earned him a good reputation.

James the Just

James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, was known for his strong faith and commitment to prayer. His wisdom and faith were evident in his leadership and his letter, the Epistle of James, which emphasizes practical faith and righteous living (James 2:14-26 KJ21). James' reputation as a man of faith and prayer earned him the title "James the Just" and a prominent role in the early Christian community.

Simeon

Simeon, a devout man living in Jerusalem, had faith that he would see the Messiah before He died. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he went to the temple where he met Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, declaring that he had seen God's salvation (Luke 2:28-30 KJ21). His faith and recognition of Jesus as the Messiah earned him honor and a good reputation.

Anna the Prophetess

Anna, an elderly prophetess who lived in the temple, demonstrated her faith through constant prayer and fasting. When she saw the infant Jesus, she gave thanks to God and spoke about Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38 KJ21). Anna’s faithfulness and devotion to God earned her recognition as a prophetess and a witness to the Messiah’s arrival.

Nicodemus

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, showed faith in Jesus by coming to Him at night to seek the truth (John 3:1-21 KJ21). Though initially cautious (defending Jesus indirectly without stating his belief in Him), Nicodemus defended Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51 KJ21) and later assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39-40 KJ21). His faith, though initially hidden, grew stronger, earning him a reputation as a believer and follower of Christ.

The Apostles (Collectively)

The apostles as a group, including Peter, James, John, and the others, are collectively known for their faith and dedication to spreading the gospel. After Jesus' resurrection, they boldly preached the message of Christ, despite persecution and hardship. Their faith in Jesus and their commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20 KJ21) earned them a lasting reputation as the foundation of the Christian church.

Paul's Co-workers

Paul’s letters mention several co-workers who demonstrated great faith in supporting his ministry. These include:

Tychicus: Described as "a beloved brother and faithful minister" (Ephesians 6:21 KJ21), Tychicus was entrusted with delivering Paul's letters and encouraging the churches.

Aristarchus: A companion of Paul who was imprisoned with him (Colossians 4:10 KJ21) and demonstrated faith by enduring hardships alongside Paul.

Luke: The beloved physician and author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts, Luke showed his faith through his detailed account of Jesus' life and the early church (Colossians 4:14 KJ21). He was a loyal companion to Paul, staying with him during his final imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:11 KJ21).

Epaphras: A faithful believer who founded the church in Colossae and fervently prayed for the believers there (Colossians 4:12-13 KJ21).

Philemon: A wealthy Christian who demonstrated his faith by hosting a church in his home and showing kindness to the converted slave Onesimus (Philemon 1:1-7 KJ21).

The Church in Antioch

The believers in Antioch demonstrated strong faith by sending missionaries, including Paul and Barnabas, to spread the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3 KJ21). Their faith in God's mission and their generosity in supporting it earned them a reputation as a pivotal community in the spread of Christianity.

John Mark

John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, initially struggled with his faith when he abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13 KJ21). However, he later redeemed himself by becoming a faithful companion to both Barnabas and Paul (2 Timothy 4:11 KJ21) and by authoring the Gospel of Mark. His perseverance and growth in faith earned him a good reputation in the early church.

Nathanael (also known as Bartholomew)

Nathanael was one of the twelve apostles, and Jesus praised him as a man "in whom is no guile" (John 1:47 KJ21). When Jesus revealed His knowledge of Nathanael's private moments, Nathanael immediately declared his faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 1:49 KJ21). His straightforward faith and integrity earned him a place among the apostles and a good reputation.

The Women at the Tomb

The women who went to Jesus' tomb early on the first day of the week demonstrated their faith and devotion to Him. They were the first to witness the resurrection and were entrusted by the angel and Jesus Himself to share the good news with the disciples (Matthew 28:1-10 KJ21). Their faithfulness in following Jesus, even in the face of uncertainty, earned them a lasting reputation as witnesses of the resurrection.

The Gerasene Demoniac

The man possessed by a legion of demons, whom Jesus healed, showed faith after his deliverance by begging to stay with Jesus. Jesus instructed him to go home and tell others what had happened, and the man obeyed and spread the news throughout the region, leading many to marvel at Jesus' power (Mark 5:18-20 KJ21). His faith and willingness to share his testimony earned him a good reputation as a witness to Jesus' miraculous power.

Sosthenes

Sosthenes, initially an opponent of Paul as the ruler of the synagogue, later became a believer and is mentioned as a co-author of 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:1, KJ21). His faith and conversion from a leader of opposition to a fellow worker with Paul highlights his significant role in the early church.

The Woman with the Alabaster Jar

This woman, often identified as Mary of Bethany, showed great faith by anointing Jesus with an expensive jar of perfume, despite the criticism from others. Jesus commended her act of faith, saying, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her (Matthew 26:13 KJ21)." Her faith and devotion to Jesus earned her a lasting reputation as an example of sacrificial love.

Jairus

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, demonstrated great faith when he approached Jesus to heal his dying daughter. Despite being told that his daughter had died, Jairus continued to believe in Jesus' power. Jesus raised his daughter from the dead, saying, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50 KJ21). Jairus' faith in the face of despair earned him a lasting reputation as an example of trust in God's power over life and death.

Matthias

Matthias was chosen by the apostles to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve apostles. His choice was based on his faithful witnessing of Jesus' ministry from the beginning, ensuring that he met the criteria set by the apostles for one who would take part in their ministry (Acts 1:21-26 KJ21). His faithfulness and commitment to Jesus earned him a place among the apostles.

The Bereans

The Bereans were commended for their noble character and faith because they "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11 KJ21). Lazy Christians are quite common in the church of today. We rarely check whether the things that the pastors are preaching to us are true or not.

We accept everything that they tell us. We often believe because it is the pastor teaching or a respectable member in church, everything they say is true. This has led to the spiritual and physical decline of many lives in church because of applying the wrong principles that we have learnt from our religious institutions.

Many of us write the Bible verses that the preacher mentions during the sermon, but we never bother to go back and read them. Let us be like the Bereans who counterchecked the things they were taught and who did a diligent study of God's Word. Their faith through their diligent study of the Scriptures and willingness to embrace the truth earned them a good reputation.

The 120 Disciples

The 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) who were gathered in the upper room after Jesus' ascension demonstrated their faith by continuing in prayer and unity. They were present when the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost, filling them with power to preach the gospel (Acts 2:1-4 KJ21). Their faith and commitment to waiting on the Lord's promise earned them a significant role in the birth of the early church.

Apollos

Apollos was an eloquent speaker and learned man who preached about Jesus with great enthusiasm. However, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him and realized he had only a partial understanding, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately. Apollos accepted their teaching and went on to become a powerful preacher of the gospel, especially in Corinth, where he greatly helped those who had believed through grace (Acts 18:24-28 KJ21). His humility, faith, and effective ministry earned him a good reputation.

The Two Blind Men

In Matthew 9:27-31, two blind men followed Jesus, crying out for mercy. Jesus asked if they believed He could heal them, and they replied, "Yea, Lord." Jesus then touched their eyes, and their sight was restored. Their faith in Jesus' power to heal them earned them a place in the gospel as examples of persistent and trusting faith. Thus, they obtained a good reputation.

The Leper Who Returned

In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus healed ten people with leprosy, but only one returned to thank Him. This man, a Samaritan, demonstrated faith by not only seeking Jesus' help but also recognizing and giving thanks for the healing he received. Jesus commended him, saying, "Thy faith hath made

thee whole" (Luke 17:19 KJ21). His gratitude and faith earned him a special mention in the gospel. We should always be grateful for everything that God has done for us.

The Centurion at the Cross

The Roman centurion who oversaw Jesus' crucifixion demonstrated faith when he witnessed Jesus' death and declared, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54 KJ21). Despite being a Gentile and part of the Roman execution squad, his recognition of Jesus' divine nature at that critical moment earned him a significant place in the gospel accounts.

The Widow of Nain

The widow of Nain experienced a profound miracle when Jesus raised her only son from the dead as they were carrying him out for burial (Luke 7:11-17 KJ21). The fact that Jesus was moved with compassion to intervene in her situation reflects her place in the narrative as someone who benefited from the grace and power of God through faith.

The Gentile Believers at Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to a large crowd that included many Gentiles. When they heard the gospel and saw the signs of the Holy Spirit, they believed and were baptized (Acts 2:41 KJ21). Their faith led to the rapid expansion of the early church and earned them a reputation as the first fruits of the Gentile mission.

Simon the Zealot

Simon the Zealot was one of the twelve apostles, known for his passionate dedication to the Jewish cause before following Jesus. His transformation from a zealot, who likely opposed Roman rule, to a disciple of Christ reflects a deep faith in Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 6:15 KJ21). Though little

is known about his specific actions, his inclusion among the apostles signifies his commitment and faith.

Mary the Mother of John Mark

Mary, the mother of John Mark, demonstrated faith by offering her home as a meeting place for believers. It was in her house that many gathered to pray for Peter when he was imprisoned, and where Peter went immediately after his miraculous release (Acts 12:12-17 KJ21). Her hospitality and support for the early church earned her recognition as a faithful believer.

The Four Friends of the Paralyzed Man

The four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus demonstrated remarkable faith by lowering him through the roof of a house to reach Jesus, believing that Jesus could heal him. Jesus, seeing their faith, forgave the man's sins and healed him (Mark 2:3-12 KJ21). Their determination and faith in Jesus' power earned them a good reputation.

The Poor Widow

Jesus commended the poor widow who gave two mites to the temple treasury, noting that she gave more than all the others because she gave out of her poverty, all she had to live on (Mark 12:41-44 KJ21). Her faith in God's provision and her willingness to give sacrificially earned her a good reputation as an example of true generosity and trust in God.

Titus

Titus was a trusted co-worker of Paul, known for his faith and leadership. Paul entrusted him with difficult tasks, such as organizing the church in Crete and delivering Paul's letters to the Corinthians (Titus 1:5 KJ21; 2 Corinthians 7:6-7 KJ21). Titus' faith, reliability, and dedication to the ministry earned him a reputation as a strong leader in the early church.

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Eutychus

Eutychus is known for a miraculous event where he fell asleep during Paul's lengthy sermon. He fell from a third-story window, and was presumed dead. Paul revived him, demonstrating the power of faith even in the face of death (Acts 20:7-12 KJ21). One of the main reasons why people sleep in church or when listening to a sermon is because they do not find Godly things interesting. I could play computer games for long periods without getting bored or sleepy or tired. When playing computer games, I never felt hungry.

When I first started listening to Godly material on the internet, I used to fall asleep within the first few minutes. However, I endured it, and it took about four years (or more) to be able to stay awake during a sermon. Now I find Godly things to be the most interesting things. Do not stop going to church or listening to Godly material because you feel sleepy or easily get bored of them. Keep abiding by God's presence and slowly you will grow in grace, and you will be able to embrace it more as you keep on learning.

In a certain sense, sleeping when a servant of God is preaching shows lack of faith. On the other hand, attending church or being present in a sermon shows faith. We can conclude that Eutychus had little faith because he was there when Paul was preaching but his faith probably had not matured enough, that is why he fell asleep during the sermon. However, being in the presence of God even though he was asleep enabled him to be raised from the dead.

If Eutychus had died in an ungodly place (like a bar, casino, etc.) he would not have been raised. Some of the unbelievers in those ungodly places would be decent people. They would have felt sorry concerning what happened, but they would not be able to do anything about the situation because God is the giver of life. That shows that there are special blessings in church or in fellowship. Psalm 122:1 (KJ21) - "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Eutychus started listening to the sermon, but he could not endure listening to the entire sermon. However, he remained there. He did not go back to his room to sleep. God raised him from the dead even though he fell asleep during a sermon. Sleeping in a sermon denoted that his faith had

reached the last point. God fills for you the remaining part when your faith has reached the last point.

When you do not understand a subject in class and you want to pass in that subject, do your best to study it. When the test comes and you have not been able to understand it properly, God will fill in the remaining part. This principle applies in everything that you do. When Daniel could not understand the vision, he prayed, and he diligently searched for the meaning. After his efforts were fruitless, the angel came to explain to him the meaning of the vision.

God came through for Eutychus when his faith had reached the last point, and He will come through for you and me too. Eutychus was in the right place and the right place is being in the presence of God. There are never-ending blessings when you are in the presence of God (the right place). Eutychus' experience, though brief, serves as a testament to the miraculous works performed by faith in the early church. How many people do you personally know who have been raised from the dead? By the little faith he had of attending Paul's sermon, Eutychus obtained a good report.

Jason

Jason, a believer in Thessalonica, showed faith by welcoming Paul and Silas into his home, even when a mob attacked his house in search of them. He was dragged before city officials and faced persecution because of his association with the apostles (Acts 17:5-9 KJ21). His faith and willingness to suffer for the gospel earned him a commendable reputation among the early Christians.

Gaius

Gaius, mentioned by Paul as his host during his stay in Corinth, was known for his hospitality and faithfulness. He is also commended by John in his third epistle for his love and support of the brethren, particularly in welcoming traveling missionaries (3 John 1:5-8 KJ21). Gaius' generosity and faith in action earned him a good reputation as a beloved brother in the faith.

Onesimus

Onesimus was a runaway slave who became a believer through Paul's ministry. Paul appealed to Philemon, Onesimus' master, to receive him back not just as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ (Philemon 1:10-16 KJ21). Onesimus' transformation from a fugitive to a faithful brother in Christ earned him a good reputation as an example of the redeeming power of the gospel.

The Household of Stephanas

The household of Stephanas was among the first, if not the first, to convert to Christianity in Achaia, and they devoted themselves to serving the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15 KJ21). Their faith and commitment to the work of the Lord earned them a good reputation as devoted servants in the early church.

Archippus

Archippus was a fellow worker mentioned by Paul, who encouraged him to "take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it" (Colossians 4:17 KJ21). His faith and dedication to his ministry earned him a commendation from Paul and a good reputation.

Tryphena and Tryphosa

These two women, mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Romans, are commended for their hard work in the Lord (Romans 16:12 KJ21). Their faith and dedication to serving the church earned them recognition and respect.

The Faithful in Colossae

Paul commended the believers in Colossae for their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints, which was evidenced by the hope laid up for them in heaven (Colossians 1:4-5 KJ21). Their faith and love earned them a good reputation among the churches.

The Church in Thessalonica

The believers in Thessalonica were known for their faith, love, and endurance in the face of persecution. Paul praised them for becoming a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, as their faith in God had become known everywhere (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 KJ21). Their steadfast faith and witness earned them a strong reputation in the early church.

Trophimus

Trophimus was a companion of Paul, mentioned as being with him during his travels. Despite facing illness, Trophimus continued to serve faithfully (2 Timothy 4:20 KJ21). His dedication and perseverance in the face of hardship earned him recognition in Paul's letters.

Phoebe

Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea, is commended by Paul for her service and support of many, including Paul himself (Romans 16:1-2 KJ21). Her faith, generosity, and leadership earned her a good reputation as a valued member of the early church.

The Church in Philippi

Paul frequently expressed his deep affection and gratitude for the believers in Philippi, praising their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (Philippians 1:5 KJ21). Their faith,

generosity, and unwavering support for Paul's ministry earned them a cherished place in the apostle's heart and a good reputation.

We have looked at the lives of various people in the Bible who obtained a good reputation by faith. There are also some people who are not mentioned in the Bible that have obtained a good reputation through faith.

They are:

Ellen Gould Harmon White

Ellen G. White is best known as one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her writings and spiritual leadership helped guide and shape the Adventist movement and largely the Christian movement. She received visions from God, emphasizing health reform, education, evangelism, character, family relations and preparation for the second coming of Christ, among other topics. She had very minimal formal schooling as she did not go past the third grade.

However, God used her tremendously. She wrote around twenty-five million words. Her writings have great wisdom. God worked through her by inspiring her missionary work. All she had to do was to yield to God's control and allow the power of God to work in her and enable her to move by faith (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Her devotion to living a Christ-centered life and reliance on divine inspiration helped her gain a stupendous reputation. Her book The Great Controversy and other writings remain influential in Christian thought. Thus, by faith, Ellen Gould White obtained a good reputation.

James White

James White, the husband of Ellen G. White, was a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He worked tirelessly as a preacher, publisher, and leader within the movement. James White demonstrated his faith by being a diligent worker in spreading the message of the soon

return of Jesus. His leadership in organizing the Adventist movement into a formal denomination reflected his strong faith in God's guidance (White Estate, n.d.).

William Miller

William Miller was a Baptist preacher who is best known for leading the Millerite movement, which anticipated the return of Jesus Christ in 1844. His careful study of the Bible led him to predict the Second Advent.

Though his prediction did not materialize as expected (leading to what is known as "The Great Disappointment"), his faith in the Bible and its prophecies led many to deeper biblical study, laying the groundwork for future religious movements, including the Seventh-day Adventists. Through faith, William obtained a tremendous reputation (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Martin Luther (the Protestant Reformer)

Martin Luther was a German monk and theologian who initiated the Protestant Reformation. His faith in salvation through grace alone and his commitment to biblical truths led him to challenge the Roman Catholic Church's teachings, especially regarding indulgences. His bold action of posting the ninety-five Theses and standing firm at the Diet of Worms established his reputation as a man of faith who reformed Christianity by making the Bible accessible to all believers (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in 1818 on a plantation in Talcot County, Maryland. He was separated from his mother as a baby and never knew his exact birth date. His master forbade him from learning to read and write, but young Douglass was determined to educate himself.

At around eight years old, he was sent to Baltimore, where his master's wife, Sophia Auld, secretly taught him the alphabet. When her husband found out, he strictly forbade it, believing that

education would make slaves unfit for servitude. Douglass, however, continued to learn in secret by trading bread for reading lessons from white children and studying newspapers.

At the age of sixteen, he was sent to a brutal slave breaker, Edward Covey, who beat him mercilessly. One day, Douglass fought back and won, gaining self-respect and inner freedom. This was a turning point—he knew he was destined to be free.

At 20 years old, Douglass escaped slavery by disguising himself as a sailor and traveling north via the Underground Railroad. He settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he changed his last name to "Douglass" to avoid capture (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Some of Frederick's outstanding achievements are: He was a powerful abolitionist speaker and author. He became a leading voice against slavery, speaking across the U.S. and Europe. His autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)*, became a bestseller worldwide and exposed the horrors of slavery. He established an anti-slavery newspaper called *The North Star*. The motto of that newspaper was: "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren."

He was an advisor to presidents & civil war efforts. He met Abraham Lincoln multiple times, advising him to let Black men fight in the Civil War. He helped recruit Black soldiers for the Union Army, leading to the formation of regiments like the 54th Massachusetts Infantry (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Douglass was a champion of women's rights. attended the Seneca Falls Convention (1848), the first women's rights convention in the U.S. He was the first Black man to hold high government positions. He served as U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia (appointed by President Hayes). He became Minister to Haiti (appointed by President Harrison).

Douglass proved that a former slave could rise to greatness, inspiring generations. His work paved the way for the abolition of slavery (13th Amendment, 1865) (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025). His writings and speeches remain powerful tools for justice and human rights today. By faith, Frederick Douglass obtained a good reputation.

Booker T. Washington

The year 1856 saw the birth of Booker T. Washington in Franklin County, Virginia. After the government abolished the Civil War and slavery, he and his family were freed. However, they remained extremely poor, and young Booker had to work hard to help support them.

From a young age, Booker had a burning desire for education, but his family was too poor to send him to school. He worked in salt mines and as a house servant for a white family. Even though he was tired from long hours of labor, he would wake up early in the morning or stay up late at night to teach himself how to read and write.

One day, Booker heard about the Hampton Institute, a school in Virginia that accepted Black students. Determined to get an education, he set out on a 500-mile journey, mostly on foot, with barely any money. Along the way, he took odd jobs and slept under sidewalks or in barns.

When he finally reached Hampton, he was dirty and exhausted. The school's headmistress, seeing his poor condition, tested him by asking him to clean a room. He cleaned it so thoroughly. The story has it that after he cleaned it, the teacher took a white handkerchief, rubbing various parts of the classroom, trying to find out if the class was truly clean. To her surprise, not a single spot of dirt was on her handkerchief. She admitted him as a student on the spot.

Since he had no money for tuition, Booker worked as a janitor at the school to pay for his education. He studied diligently and impressed his teachers with his hard work and intelligence. One of his biggest supporters was General Samuel C. Armstrong, the school's founder, who helped mentor him.

After graduating, Washington became a teacher and later founded the Tuskegee Institute, a school dedicated to educating Black students in practical trades (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Through sheer determination, sacrifice, and arduous work, Booker T. Washington lifted himself from slavery to become one of the greatest Black educators and leaders in American history. His story continues to inspire generations.

By faith (portrayed through his actions), Booker T. Washington obtained a good reputation and inspired many enslaved people to acquire education.

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Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was born as Mohandas Koramchand Gandhi on October 2nd, 1869, in Porbandar, India and died in 1948. The title "Mahatma", which means "Great Soul" in Sanskrit, was given to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi by Rabindranath Tagore, the famous Indian poet and Nobel laureate.

Tagore first referred to Gandhi as Mahatma in 1915 to honor his deep commitment to nonviolent resistance, truth, and justice in India's struggle for independence. The title became widely used, though Gandhi himself was reluctant to accept it, believing he was just a humble servant of the people.

Mahatma's father was a chief minister, and his mother was deeply religious, influencing his later beliefs in non-violence and fasting. He studied law at Inner Temple in London, England and moved to South Africa in 1983 after failing to establish a law practice in India.

In South Africa, he was thrown off a train for refusing to leave the first-class compartment reserved for white people. This incident changed his life, making him determined to fight for justice. He developed a philosophy called Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance) which he used to lead campaigns against discriminatory laws against Indians.

In 1930 led the Salt March (1930) which was a 240-mile march to Dandi to protest British salt taxes. This became a turning point in India's freedom struggle.

His philosophy of nonviolence and civil disobedience influenced Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and countless other leaders fighting oppression across the world.

Unlike many leaders, Gandhi lived simply, wore humble clothes, and refused luxury—choosing to identify with the poor. He spun his own clothes using a charkha (spinning wheel) and encouraged self-reliance.

Even after India gained freedom, Gandhi continued to fight for:

- Religious unity between Hindus and Muslims
- The rights of the untouchables (Dalits), whom he called *Harijans* (Children of God)
- Women's rights, encouraging them to participate in the freedom struggle

When India gained independence in 1947, violent riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi went on a hunger strike, refusing to eat until the fighting stopped. His sheer willpower forced warring groups to reconcile (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Even after dedicating his life to peace, he was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu extremist who opposed his message of unity (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Gandhi's belief that "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind" remains one of the most powerful principles of justice today.

Gandhi proved that one man, armed with truth and love, could shake the world without raising a fist.

Marcus Garvey

According to the Encyclopædia Britannica, Marcus Garvey was born in 1887. He was a visionary who believed in Black self-reliance, economic empowerment, and African unity. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which became the largest Black-led movement in history. The organization has millions of members worldwide. He inspired future leaders like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Kwame Nkrumah.

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 and died in 1997. She devoted her life to serving the poorest of the poor, particularly in Kolkata, India. She loved those who were considered "untouchable" without hesitation. She cared for people whom other people avoided such as those with leprosy, AIDS, and those living in extreme poverty. Mother Teresa embraced them with love and treated them with dignity.

In 1950, she started a global charity movement known as *The Missionaries of Charity* which grew into a worldwide network of over five thousand nuns, serving the poor in over 130 countries. Her mission extended to orphanages, hospices and refugee camps. She chose to live in extreme

simplicity among the poor because she prioritized the comfort of other people over her own comfort.

Mother Teresa's actions portrayed an extreme level of sacrifice. Many of us usually help the poor with the 'extra' possessions that we do not need. Mother Teresa helped the poor even with what she needed most. She would rather stay hungry but ensure that someone else is well fed. She would rather thirst but ensure that someone has something to drink. She served people without discrimination regardless of religion, caste, or nationality. She believed that serving the poor was serving Jesus Himself following Matthew 25:35-40, where Jesus compares servitude to the poor as servitude to Himself.

Mother Teresa won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 but refused the lavish banquet that came with it. Instead, she asked that the money for the banquet to be used to feed the poor. Even in old age she never stopped serving as she worked until her last breath. She believed in the possibility of a better society in future (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025). By faith, Mother Teresa obtained a good reputation.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X was born as Malcolm Little in 1925. He changed his last name to X as a symbolic rejection of the surname, "Little," which he considered a slave name. The "X" represented the African family name that was lost due to slavery. Since many African Americans had their original surnames stripped away and replaced with European names, Malcolm X used "X" to signify his lost heritage. The "X" became a symbol of Black empowerment and self-determination even after his death.

Malcolm went from a life of crime to becoming one of the most powerful voices of Black empowerment. He did not sugarcoat the brutal realities of racism. His powerful speeches and his autobiography became blueprints for later Black liberation movements (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

He inspired Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King Jr. (in later years). He died at the age of thirty-nine (same as Martin Luther King Jr.) through assassination (same as Marting Luther King Jr.) His faith in the liberation of the Black people made him obtain a good reputation.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and civil rights leader. His faith in God and belief in the biblical teachings of justice, peace, and love motivated him to lead the fight for civil rights in the United States. King's belief in nonviolence, inspired by the teachings of Jesus, and his reliance on prayer and scripture in times of trial helped him gain a global reputation as a Christian leader dedicated to equality and human dignity (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Dr. Ben Carson

Dr. Ben Carson is a renowned neurosurgeon and public figure who credits his medical achievements and life success to his faith in God. He became famous for performing pioneering surgeries, such as the first successful separation of conjoined twins at the head (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Throughout his career, Carson has spoken openly about how prayer and reliance on God's wisdom have guided him in difficult surgeries and life decisions. This has caused him to gain a reputation as a man of faith who believed that with God, all things are possible.

Nick Vujicic

Nick Vujicic is an evangelist and motivational speaker born without limbs. Despite his physical challenges, his faith in God's purpose for his life has enabled him to inspire millions around the world.

Nick's powerful message that faith in Jesus Christ brings joy and purpose in life's hardships has earned him widespread respect. He has shared how his personal relationship with Jesus enabled him to overcome despair and live a life of meaning and service (Nick Vujicic Ministries, n.d.)

Reuben Kigame

Reuben Kigame is a well-known Kenyan gospel musician, songwriter, worship leader, and social activist. He is recognized not only for his music career but also for his advocacy on issues such as governance, education, disability rights, and Christian values.

Born in 1966, Kigame lost his sight at the age of three due to a medical condition.

He recalls how he discovered he had lost his sight: “I remember one evening after mum blessed our dinner at home, I reached out for the plate and missed it. This shocked me and everyone who was present at the dinner table,” he says (Nyakundi, 2025).

He was later to discover that he had lost his sight because of a cataract attack which was detected late due to poor medical facilities in the area where he grew up (Nyakundi, 2025).

His blind state did not deter him from pursuing his passions and using his talents to make a significant impact in Kenya and beyond.

Reuben Kigame is one of Kenya's most respected gospel musicians, known for his worship songs that have touched the hearts of many across the country. His music blends African rhythms with Christian themes, focusing on faith, hope, and the goodness of God. Some of his popular songs include *“Enda Nasi,” “Wewe Watosha,” “When I was a boy,” “Another country,” “Who will help the refugees?,”* and *“Msaada Wangu”* among many others.

John C. Maxwell

John C. Maxwell is a well-known leadership expert, author, and pastor. His Christian faith underpins much of his teaching on leadership, integrity, and personal development (McLennan Community College, n.d.). Maxwell has gained a good reputation by combining biblical principles with leadership strategies. His books, like “The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership,” “The 15 Laws of Growth,” “The 17 laws of Teamwork,” “Failing Forward,” “Today Matters,” “The 16 Laws of Communication,” and “Jesus the High Road Leader,” among others incorporate values that reflect his Christian worldview and faith-driven approach to success.

John D. Rockefeller

John D. Rockefeller, who is known as the richest man who ever lived in modern history, was a devout Christian who believed in the importance of giving back to society. His faith led him to use his vast wealth for philanthropic causes. He gained a reputation for his charitable works, founding institutions like the University of Chicago and Rockefeller Foundation. His philanthropy was rooted in his belief that wealth was a gift from God to be used for the betterment of humanity (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Colonel Sanders

Colonel Harland Sanders was the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025). He is another individual who gained a good reputation for his faith in God. Though he faced many setbacks in life, he always credited God for his eventual success.

Sanders was known for openly acknowledging his Christian faith and was baptized later in life. I saw him in a media interview emphasizing on returning tithe to God. His persistence and trust in God despite early failures made him a symbol of how faith can lead to eventual success and fulfillment.

Thomas Sankara

Thomas Sankara, who served as the President of Burkina Faso from 1983 to 1987, is renowned for his revolutionary leadership and visionary reforms (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025). Here's how Sankara earned his good reputation:

Commitment to Revolutionary Ideals

Anti-Imperialism and Independence: Sankara was a strong advocate for national sovereignty and resistance against colonial and neo-colonial influence. He believed in the importance of Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) asserting its own path and resisting external interference.

Self-Reliance: His philosophy emphasized the need for Africa to rely on its own resources and capabilities. Sankara promoted self-sufficiency and economic independence, aiming to reduce reliance on foreign aid and support local development.

Social and Economic Reforms

Land Reforms: Sankara's government implemented land reforms to redistribute land from traditional elites and promote agricultural productivity. This aimed to empower rural farmers and reduce economic inequalities.

Education and Health: Sankara prioritized education and healthcare, leading initiatives to improve literacy rates, particularly among women, and to expand access to healthcare services. His policies included vaccination programs and health education campaigns.

Women's Rights: Sankara was a vocal advocate for gender equality. His government implemented policies to improve the status of women, including promoting women to leadership positions and supporting women's rights in education and employment.

Anti-Corruption and Integrity

Fighting Corruption: Sankara was known for his commitment to combat corruption and promoting transparency within the government. He rejected the lavish lifestyle of previous leaders and lived modestly, setting an example for public service.

Personal Integrity: His personal integrity and dedication to his principles earned him respect. Sankara's refusal to engage in corrupt practices or seek personal gain reflected his commitment to the revolutionary ideals he championed.

Pan-Africanism and Global Solidarity

Pan-Africanism: Sankara was a strong supporter of Pan-Africanism and sought to foster solidarity among African nations. He worked to build alliances with other African leaders and support liberation movements across the continent.

Global Advocacy: On the international stage, Sankara spoke out against global injustices and the exploitation of developing countries. He used his platform to advocate for fair trade practices and the rights of poorer nations.

Legacy and Influence

Inspirational Leadership: Despite his relatively short time in power, Sankara's visionary leadership left a lasting impact. He inspired many with his ideas on self-reliance, social justice, and resistance to oppression.

Martyrdom and Memory: Sankara's assassination in 1987 did not diminish his legacy. He is remembered as a martyr who stood firmly for his principles and is often celebrated for his commitment to improving the lives of his people.

Thomas Sankara earned his good reputation through faith. He had an unwavering commitment to revolutionary ideals, social justice, and anti-imperialism. His leadership in implementing progressive reforms, combating corruption, and advocating for Pan-Africanism made a significant impact on Burkina Faso and inspired many across Africa and across the world.

John Pombe Magufuli

John Pombe Magufuli, who served as the President of Tanzania from 2015 to 2021, implemented several significant reforms and initiatives during his tenure.

Magufuli's administration took a strong stance against corruption, leading to the dismissal of dishonest public officials and the establishment of anti-graft courts (The Citizen, 2025).

His government prioritized infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the Central Railway Line and the construction of the Dodoma to Dar es Salaam Highway (The Citizen, 2025).

Magufuli introduced a free education policy in all government-run primary and secondary schools, resulting in a significant increase in student enrollment (The East African, 2025).

The administration increased funding for the healthcare sector, leading to the construction of new health facilities and the improvement of existing ones (The East African, 2025). Magufuli focused on stimulating economic growth through various initiatives, including the promotion of local industries and the improvement of the business environment (Monitor, 2025).

His government implemented reforms to enhance transparency in the mining sector and increased the government's share of revenues from mineral resources (The East African, 2025).

Magufuli's administration worked to streamline government operations and reduce waste, introducing measures to improve efficiency in public services and reduce unnecessary bureaucratic red tape (The Citizen, 2025).

Hands-On Leadership:

Known for his hands-on approach, Magufuli often visited government offices and public facilities unannounced to ensure they were operating effectively (The East African, 2025).

These initiatives reflect Magufuli's commitment to transforming Tanzania through infrastructure development, economic growth, and improved public services.

Patrice Lumumba

Lumumba’s unwavering belief in the right of the Congolese people to self-determination and independence drove his political activism. As the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he worked towards ending colonial rule and promoting national unity.

Despite facing considerable opposition and political challenges, Lumumba’s commitment to his ideals and his vision for a free and prosperous Congo earned him a lasting legacy as a symbol of resistance against colonial oppression. Lumumba’s advocacy for Pan-Africanism and his efforts to foster unity among African nations highlighted his faith in collective strength and solidarity across the continent (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela's steadfast belief in the principles of equality and justice drove his fight against apartheid in South Africa. Despite enduring 27 years of imprisonment, he remained committed to his cause, believing that justice and reconciliation were possible.

After his release, Mandela became South Africa's first Black president and worked tirelessly to heal the nation and promote racial reconciliation. His faith in the power of forgiveness and unity played a crucial role in transforming South Africa's socio-political landscape (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

Mandela's personal sacrifice and dedication to the greater good earned him immense respect. His willingness to forgive his oppressors and his efforts to build a democratic South Africa reflect his deep faith in human dignity and justice.

Renowned Kenyan Journalist Jeff Koinange while talking about Nelson Mandela, he mentioned him as a man who many consider a living saint (at that time Nelson Mandela was still alive). Reggae musician Orville Richard Burrell alias Shaggy has said in several interviews that when he met Nelson Mandela, he felt that he was interacting with someone divine. He said Mandela was the closest thing he had seen to a god. He said when he met the Pope and the Queen (Queen Elizabeth), he did not feel like that. Mandela believed in a South Africa that was free from discrimination. He served almost three decades in prison because of his belief (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025). By faith, Nelson Mandela obtained a good reputation.

Jesus

All the above listed people are great, but Jesus Christ is the greatest (to say the least). I had to mention Him last as a seal of all universal greatness. Jesus Christ is always doing great things to us ever since human beings were created. His act of creating us is an act of love. He died on the cross because he had faith that it is possible for us to get saved.

Jesus did many great things. Jesus mentored people (commissioning of the disciples in Matthew 10:1-8, Mark 3:13-19, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6, Luke 6:12-16, Acts 1:8)), leading by example. He Performed Miracles. He preached God's Word. He did God the Father's will (John 6:38). He

changed water into wine (John 2:1-11). He cured the nobleman's son (John 4:46-47). Jesus enabled the disciples to catch a great haul of fish (Luke 5:1-11).

Jesus cast out an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-26). He healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15). He healed a person with leprosy (Mark 1:40-45). He healed a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). He healed a man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:9-13). He raised a widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). He calmed a storm on the sea (Matthew 8:23-27).

Jesus healed a woman with an issue of blood (Matthew 9:20-22). He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26). He healed two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31). He cast out a mute demon (Matthew 9:32-33). He fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

Jesus walked on water (Matthew 14:22-33). He healed a girl possessed by a demon (Matthew 15:21-28). He healed a man who is deaf and nonspeaking (Mark 7:31-37). He fed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fish (Matthew 15:32-39). He healed a blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26).

Jesus did various miracles on the Sabbath because the Sabbath day is a day of rest and one who is disturbed is not able to rest. Thus, He healed various people on Sabbath so that they could have rest.

Some of the miracles He did on Sabbath were:

He cast out an unclean spirit from a man in the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37). He healed Peter's mother-in-law who had a fever (Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39).

Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue (Matthew 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11). He healed a disabled man by the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1-18). He healed a crippled woman in the synagogue (Luke 13:10-17). He healed a man with dropsy in the house of a Pharisee (Luke 14:1-6). He healed a man born blind by making mud and anointing his eyes (John 9:1-7, 14).

John 21:25 (KJ21) - "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."

Jesus did many other wonderful and miraculous things that were not listed in the Bible. Only a few of the things He did were selected and written. John says that if they were to list all, the books would be too many to fit in the world.

While on this earth as a human being, Jesus did no sin, but He was made sin so that we could be saved from sin.

Philippians 2:8-11 (KJ21) - "[8] And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. [9] Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, [10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, [11] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God the Father exalted Jesus and gave Him a name above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. By faith, Jesus Himself obtained a good reputation.

Each of these individuals gained a good reputation through their faith by consistently living out their beliefs and trusting God in their personal, professional, and spiritual journeys. Whether through leadership, charity, perseverance, or innovation, their faith was central to their accomplishments and legacy.

The people mentioned were not perfect; some made what can be considered as big mistakes, like Solomon who began worshiping idols. Abraham, who is acknowledged as the father of faith, made mistakes too. He lied that Sarah was his sister and he agreed to have a child with Haggar which was against God's will.

Those sinful actions Abraham did showed a lack of faith, but he is still called the father of faith. Those people who realized their mistakes and went back to God were forgiven because God is good, and His mercy endures forever (Psalm 100:5). Reading from all these examples, it is without doubt that the best way to obtain a great reputation is by faith. The only way to obtain a greater than great reputation is by having faith in the Most High God.

Hebrews 11:2 (KJ21) - "For by it the elders obtained a good report."

Hebrews 11:2 (AMP) - "For by this [kind of] faith the men of old gained [divine] approval."

Hebrews 11:2 (NLT) - "Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation."

Hebrews 11:2 (MSG) - "The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for the lessons that I have learned about these great people. Truly it is faith that makes people obtain a good reputation. Help me to have faith in You always and fill in for me where my faith in You runs short. Please help me to conduct the assignment that You have given me with diligence and faith. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Which Biblical figure listed stood out the most to you? Why did they stand out?
2. Which non-Biblical figure stood out the most to you? Why did they stand out?
3. List the outstanding righteous character traits that you have picked from these great people that you would like to emulate.
4. What assignment has God given you? Ask God to guide you on how to do it in the best possible way.
5. Make a daily prayer to God to boost your faith.
6. List the evil generational patterns in your family and pray against them.
7. List the good generational patterns in your family and pray that you have them as well.

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CHAPTER 4

THE INVISIBLE OR THE VISIBLE

In the beginning of creation, where darkness meets the Word,
Invisible threads of purpose, through galaxies stirred.
Words unseen birthed everything, with a breath divine,
The power of the invisible Word, where eternity entwines.

"In the beginning was the Word," the ancient truth declared,
The foundation of existence, in divine script shared.
Invisible like the imagination racing through my mind,
God's Word created the world and got it aligned.

In the narrative of choices, where birthright meets desire,
Jacob esteemed the spiritual; He wanted to go higher,
Invisible like the wind, powerful without revealing itself,
God's Word an elevator placed Jacob on the topmost shelf.

God's work is clear like an HD screen displaying the wonders of nature,
Created by God's Word that guides us to infinite treasure,
The invisible makes the visible so beautiful a scene to capture,
God's love goes beyond the universe; no one can measure.

Moses, the wanderer, in the wilderness vast,
Choosing affliction over Egypt's riches amassed.
Invisible rewards, in the promise of the divine,
A show of faith, where earthly treasures resign.

Job, a portrait of integrity tested and tried,
Invisible struggles, where faith and suffering collide.
Moments of endurance, beneath the heavenly gaze,
Invisible strength in life's perplexing maze.

Steadfast like an automatic backup when life's signals falter,
When life seems to grow thin, faith should always grow fatter,
Don't doubt your vision, your dreams don't let them shatter,
With God, you can lead better than Moses, David, or Jimmy Carter.

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Through uncertainties, faith guides, believing in the invisible plan,
God wants you to be victorious; He wants you to say, "Yes we Can."
In the Bible's golden pages, there is more than more to learn,
Putting the spiritual above the material will make your whole life turn.

Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

The invisible Word of God created the visible universe and everything in it. What we can see was brought into existence by what we cannot see. The question is, which is more powerful? Is it the visible things or the invisible Word of God that created the visible things? The Creator is more potent than the creation. Creation consists of all living things in our environment, even in the most powerful nations.

Presidents, kings, judges, magicians and all scientists have power, but there is a power that is more powerful than them, and that is the power of God's Word.

John 1:1 (KJV) – "In the beginning was the Word." Genesis 1:1 (KJV) – "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Psalm 33:6 (KJV) – "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." The world has a beginning, the angels have a beginning, animals have a beginning, humans have a beginning, heaven has a beginning, and God's Word created the beginning.

God's Word is spiritual, and the material world is physical. God's Word was there before all that is physical. In other words, the spiritual came before the physical. Therefore, what should we put first, the spiritual or the material? As followers of Christ, beings created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), we need to do things as God does to live in total harmony with God's creation.

Since God's word came before everything else, we need to put God's Word first before everything else. The spiritual should always precede the physical in everything that we do. Genuinely successful people today and in Biblical times understood this principle, so they put the spiritual first, and everything else in their lives flowed seamlessly.

One example of someone who understood this principle is Jacob.

Genesis 25:30-34 (KJV) – "[30] And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. [32] And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? [33] And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright

unto Jacob. [34] Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

Jacob understood the value of the birthright. He understood that it was more important than the basic human needs, food, shelter and clothing. He knew the birthright had a greater price than anything else in the physical world. The birthright could give him things that the material world contains, including wealth, but wealth could not give him the birthright.

"If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to His own image. Then God can use us to do His will. The power given us works from within outwardly, leading us to communicate to others the truth that has been communicated to us." – Christ Object Lessons, Page 100.1, Ellen G. White.

If studied and obeyed, the Word of God can provide you with money, but no amount of money can buy the Word of God. The birthright was priceless. Esau did not understand this, so he sold his birthright for a plate of food as he faced an extremity, "Behold, I'm at the point of dying."

Jacob took advantage of Esau's situation and gave Esau food to exchange for his birthright. Selling his birthright, Esau committed a grievous mistake that could not be reversed. Throughout his life on earth, he was able to get other plates of food, but he could not get his birthright back. Genesis 27 discusses how Jacob deceived his father to get Esau's blessings. Therefore, Jacob got both Esau's birthright and blessings.

"Esau grew up loving self-gratification and centering all his interest in the present. Impatient of restraint, he delighted in the wild freedom of the chase, and early chose the life of a hunter. Yet he was the father's favorite. The quiet, peace-loving shepherd was attracted by the daring and vigor of this elder son, who fearlessly ranged over mountain and desert, returning home with game for his father and with exciting accounts of his adventurous life. Jacob, thoughtful, diligent, and care-taking, ever thinking more of the future than the present, was content to dwell at home, occupied in the care of the flocks and the tillage of the soil. His patient perseverance, thrift, and foresight were valued by the mother. His affections were deep and strong, and his gentle, unremitting attentions added far more to her happiness than did the boisterous and occasional kindnesses of

Esau. To Rebekah, Jacob was the dearer son." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 177.2, Ellen G. White.

The birthright was rightfully Esau's, but he despised it (Genesis 25:34). He despised what rightfully belonged to him and gave it cheaply to someone else who did not deserve it.

Many people in the church and many born in Christian families will be lost, and many outside the church born to non-Christian families will be saved. The blessing was meant for Esau, but Jacob took it too. Thus Esau lost two spiritual things of terrific value, the birthright and the blessing.

"Isaac made known to his sons these privileges and conditions, and plainly stated that Esau, as the eldest, was the one entitled to the birthright. But Esau had no love for devotion, no inclination to a religious life. The requirements that accompanied the spiritual birthright were an unwelcome and even hateful restraint to him. The law of God, which was the condition of the divine covenant with Abraham, was regarded by Esau as a yoke of bondage. Bent on self-indulgence, he desired nothing so much as liberty to do as he pleased. To him power and riches, feasting and reveling, were happiness. He gloried in the unrestrained freedom of his wild, roving life. Rebekah remembered the words of the Angel, and she read with clearer insight than did her husband the character of their sons. She was convinced that the heritage of divine promise was intended for Jacob. She repeated to Isaac the Angel's words; but the father's affections were centered upon the elder son, and he was unshaken in his purpose."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 178.1, Ellen G. White.

God always does His best to bring us to the light of truth. The gospel is everywhere. It is preached in churches. It is preached on the streets and sometimes on public buses. There are hospitals and hotel rooms that have Bibles. Missionaries are everywhere preaching the gospel from one end of the earth to another. There are many good Christian books and thousands of gospel ministers who preach the gospel. There are sermons on YouTube and Christian blogs as well.

This means that it is difficult to find someone in this world who has no access to the gospel. God's message was readily available to Esau the same way it is available to us. However, like Esau, we esteem it lightly. We view God's law as a yoke of bondage even though the Bible tells us that the Decalogue is meant to liberate us. We view God's Word as mere words and don't comprehend its infinite power. Therefore, we give money-making activities more time than God's Word because

we value material possessions more. The need for instant gratification is treasured in our hearts, and in turn, we block the light of truth.

“Jacob had learned from his mother of the divine intimation that the birthright should fall to him, and he was filled with an unspeakable desire for the privileges which it would confer. It was not the possession of his father’s wealth that he craved; the spiritual birthright was the object of his longing. To commune with God as did righteous Abraham, to offer the sacrifice of atonement for his family, to be the progenitor of the chosen people and of the promised Messiah, and to inherit the immortal possessions embraced in the blessings of the covenant—here were the privileges and honors that kindled his most ardent desires. His mind was ever reaching forward to the future, and seeking to grasp its unseen blessings.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 178.2, Ellen G. White.

Esau valued the present and thought less about the future. Jacob focused on eternity. He did not disregard the present moment. However, his affections were more focused on the future than the present. He understood that God’s blessings carried more benefits than material wealth. He also knew that material wealth was not the essential thing to seek in life. People who commit crimes and do all sorts of illegal and immoral businesses have the same view as Esau. They esteem material possessions to be the most valuable and so they go to lengths of doing anything to acquire them.

Esau became successful, but Jacob surpassed him in success by a greater degree. If we focus on material wealth only, we can be successful in acquiring it, but we would not be successful as someone whose focus is on God and the blessings of God. The unrighteous and unrepentant person who spends all his life sinning to acquire riches has only this life to live. However, the person who is steadfast in God’s purpose, always seeking God’s face will be blessed in this life and, most importantly, will inherit eternal life free from sorrow and danger.

“When Esau, coming home one day faint and weary from the chase, asked for the food that Jacob was preparing, the latter, with whom one thought was ever uppermost, seized upon his advantage, and offered to satisfy his brother’s hunger at the price of the birthright. “Behold, I am at the point to die,” cried the reckless, self-indulgent hunter, “and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” And for a dish of red pottage he parted with his birthright, and confirmed the transaction by an oath. A short time at most would have secured him food in his father’s tents, but to satisfy the desire of the moment he carelessly bartered the glorious heritage that God Himself had promised

to his fathers. His whole interest was in the present. He was ready to sacrifice the heavenly to the earthly, to exchange a future good for a momentary indulgence." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 179.1, Ellen G. White.

"Thus Esau despised his birthright." In disposing of it he felt a sense of relief. Now his way was unobstructed; he could do as he liked. For this wild pleasure, miscalled freedom, how many are still selling their birthright to an inheritance pure and undefiled, eternal in the heavens!" – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 179.1, Ellen G. White.

Genesis 32:26 (KJV) – "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

After Jacob took away Esau's birthright and blessing, he encountered an angel in a dream whom he wrestled with. His understanding of divine blessings made him cling to the angel firmly. Therefore, he told the angel, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me (Genesis 32:26)."

The Angel was physically stronger than Jacob since we were created a little lower than them, but Jacob could not give up despite the Angel being exceedingly more powerful than he was. When they encounter someone or situations mightier than them, most human beings give up. Few will fight till the end. Jacob was not even among the most powerful human beings on earth, but here he was, fighting with an angel stronger than all humans combined. This act showed that he comprehended the prodigious benefits of God's blessings.

"It was in a lonely, mountainous region, the haunt of wild beasts and the lurking place of robbers and murderers. Solitary and unprotected, Jacob bowed in deep distress upon the earth. It was midnight. All that made life dear to him were at a distance, exposed to danger and death. Bitterest of all was the thought that it was his own sin which had brought this peril upon the innocent. With earnest cries and tears he made his prayer before God. Suddenly a strong hand was laid upon him. He thought that an enemy was seeking his life, and he endeavored to wrest himself from the grasp of his assailant. In the darkness the two struggled for the mastery. Not a word was spoken, but Jacob put forth all his strength, and did not relax his efforts for a moment. While he was thus battling for his life, the sense of his guilt pressed upon his soul; his sins rose up before him, to shut him out from God. But in his terrible extremity he remembered God's promises, and his whole heart went out in entreaty for His mercy. The struggle continued until near the break of day, when

the stranger placed his finger upon Jacob's thigh, and he was crippled instantly. The patriarch now discerned the character of his antagonist. He knew that he had been in conflict with a heavenly messenger, and this was why his almost superhuman effort had not gained the victory. It was Christ, "the Angel of the covenant," who had revealed Himself to Jacob. The patriarch was now disabled and suffering the keenest pain, but he would not loosen his hold. All penitent and broken, he clung to the Angel; "he wept, and made supplication" (Hosea 12:4), pleading for a blessing. He must have the assurance that his sin was pardoned. Physical pain was not sufficient to divert his mind from this object. His determination grew stronger, his faith more earnest and persevering, until the very last. The Angel tried to release Himself; He urged, "Let Me go, for the day breaketh;" but Jacob answered, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Had this been a boastful, presumptuous confidence, Jacob would have been instantly destroyed; but his was the assurance of one who confesses his own unworthiness, yet trusts the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 196.3, Ellen G. White.

Genesis 32:28-29 (AMPC) – "[28] And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob [supplanter], but Israel [contender with God]; for you have contended and have power with God and with men and have prevailed. [29] Then Jacob asked Him, Tell me, I pray You, what [in contrast] is Your name? But He said, Why is it that you ask My name? And [the Angel of God declared] a blessing on [Jacob] there."

"Jacob had received the blessing for which his soul had longed. His sin as a supplanter and deceiver had been pardoned. The crisis in his life was past. Doubt, perplexity, and remorse had embittered his existence, but now all was changed; and sweet was the peace of reconciliation with God. Jacob no longer feared to meet his brother. God, who had forgiven his sin, could move the heart of Esau also to accept his humiliation and repentance." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 198.1, Ellen G. White.

When God saw how determined Jacob was to get the blessing from Him, The Lord blessed Jacob. God tests us sometimes to see how committed we are to Him. That is why sometimes our prayers seem delayed. He wants us to persist more in asking and serving Him before He gives us some of the things we ask for. He does not do this out of selfishness. He does this out of love. He gives us such experiences to make us grow more spiritually and develop adequate mental muscle to handle the blessings He has in store for us.

The challenging experiences train us spiritually and mentally, giving us a depth of character and discipline, which results in the harmonious development of physical, mental and spiritual powers. When we persist in serving God with a steadfastness of purpose, He will have no other choice but to bless us, like He blessed Jacob.

"Because of his indifference to the divine blessings and requirements, Esau is called in Scripture "a profane person." Verse 16. He represents those who lightly value the redemption purchased for them by Christ, and are ready to sacrifice their heirship to heaven for the perishable things of earth. Multitudes live for the present, with no thought or care for the future. Like Esau they cry, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." 1 Corinthians 15:32. They are controlled by inclination; and rather than practice self-denial, they will forgo the most valuable considerations. If one must be relinquished, the gratification of a depraved appetite or the heavenly blessings promised only to the self-denying and God-fearing, the claims of appetite prevail, and God and heaven are virtually despised. How many, even of professed Christians, cling to indulgences that are injurious to health and that benumb the sensibilities of the soul. When the duty is presented of cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, they are offended. They see that they cannot retain these hurtful gratifications and yet secure heaven, and they conclude that since the way to eternal life is so strait, they will no longer walk therein." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 181.3, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:24-27 (KJV) – "[24] By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. [27] By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward (Hebrews 11:24-26)."

"Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of

armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 245.4, Ellen G. White.

"Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison. The magnificent palace of Pharaoh and the monarch's throne were held out as an inducement to Moses; but he knew that the sinful pleasures that make men forget God were in its lordly courts. He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch's crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer. This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 246.1, Ellen G. White.

Moses forsook Egypt, a beautiful physical environment, to dwell in the wilderness, an environment that was not beautiful nor developed like Egypt. He esteemed the affliction he faced in the wilderness more than the beauty of Egypt and the royal privileges of Pharaoh's palace to which he was accustomed.

Hebrews 11:24 tells us that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (a king he could see) and chose to be a child of God (whom he could not see). Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater than the material possessions in Egypt. He did not fear the wrath of the visible king Pharaoh but feared the wrath of the invisible King of Kings, God.

"Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 247.4, Ellen G. White.

"Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation

on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 247.4, Ellen G. White.

Job 2:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. [10] But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Job esteemed the eternal treasure more than the suffering he was facing. His wife did not look beyond the sorrow, so he gave Job that foolish, wicked advice. Job knew the pain would not last forever since he would eventually die one day. He could not exchange his love for God for the suffering he had.

Esau's behavior is not strange behavior among people in the world today. In a media interview with Ellen DeGeneres, former NBA basketball player Magic Johnson said that one of the biggest mistakes he has ever made in his career was rejecting a deal of being paid with stocks when Nike company was new because he wanted physical money. He ended up not getting cash, and he ended up not getting stocks as well because he rejected that deal.

Johnson says that is one of his regrets, especially now when he sees how successful the Nike company is. The stocks he was to be paid back then would now be more valuable than the money he requested. His mistake was similar to Esau's putting the physical (a thing that gives you instant gratification) first before the spiritual (things that give you long-term and long-lasting gratification).

As narrated by YouTuber Abel Mutua, before Hip Hop musician Curtis Jackson alias 50 Cent, became famous, he had a producer who aided him in producing his mixtape. The mixtape got him signed to the Interscope Records label company. When Jackson's producer heard this, he went and demanded 50,000 U.S. Dollars from Jackson because he was the one who produced that mixtape.

Jackson told him to take 30,000 dollars at present, and one percent of his total album sales in the future after his album has sold. The producer refused and insisted on his 50,000 dollars.

Interscope had no choice but to pay him the money he requested. Not long after he was paid the album sold 13,000,000 copies. Let's assume one copy was sold for 10 dollars (the least average); the album garnered 130,000,000 U.S. dollars. Had the producer agreed to that deal, he would have received 1,300,000 US dollars, but he forfeited it because of wanting instant gratification. Not only would he have gotten that, but he would have also gotten money from subsequent albums released by Jackson.

Basketball player Stevin "Hedake" Smith played point guard for Arizona State University from 1991 through 1994. He was raised in poverty and aspired to play for the NBA. While at Arizona State University, he was among the best basketball players. However, due to greed and wanting instant gratification, he became involved in the 1994 Arizona State point-shaving scandal with teammate Isaac Burton.

Gamblers used to pay Smith to make the Arizona State University team lose, and in return, he would receive 20,000 U.S. Dollars per game. This trick got noticed, and investigation authorities started investigating. This caused him to get caught. He was later sentenced to prison to serve a jail term of one year and one day. His admission to join the NBA after he finished school was revoked because of the scandal. He would have made his ambitions come true if he had been patient.

The same applies to us today. Many have abandoned their God-given purposes because they are busy with jobs that help them pay their bills. Many have lost lucrative opportunities because they were disguised as not well-paying opportunities.

Many have been unable to access the blessings of God because they have despised God's Word. Some have Bibles that are dusting on the shelves and have never been opened. Many suffer from illnesses, and they have Ellen G. White's books in their homes, such as Ministry of Healing and Counsels on Health. Books that may completely change their health conditions if they follow their principles to the last detail.

Various Christians have not experienced the windows of heaven opening up in their lives because of not following Malachi 3:10, which talks about the blessings of tithing. They have read it but

have not obeyed it. Many Sabbath-believing Christians have despised the Sabbath message, so they have blocked the Sabbath blessings. We lose a lot when we despise what is rightfully ours.

“Multitudes are selling their birthright for sensual indulgence. Health is sacrificed, the mental faculties are enfeebled, and heaven is forfeited; and all for a mere temporary pleasure—an indulgence at once both weakening and debasing in its character. As Esau awoke to see the folly of his rash exchange when it was too late to recover his loss, so it will be in the day of God with those who have bartered their heirship to heaven for selfish gratifications.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 182.1, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV) – “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the wisdom shared through your Word and the examples of those who have walked before us.

Please help us to understand the eternal value of prioritizing the spiritual over the material in our lives. Grant us the strength to align our actions with our faith, seeking Your kingdom and righteousness first.

May we be mindful of our choices and priorities, ensuring that our spiritual well-being precedes worldly pursuits. Guide us, Lord, as we strive to live harmoniously with Your divine principles.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Activity

Reflect on Your Priorities:

- Take some time to reflect on your daily activities and priorities. What aspects of your life are currently taking precedence – the spiritual or the material?
- Consider your daily routine, work, relationships, and leisure activities. Are there areas where you can consciously prioritize the spiritual aspect more?

Create a Spiritual Priority List:

- List spiritual activities or practices that align with your beliefs and values. This list could include prayer, meditation, reading sacred texts, attending religious services, or acts of kindness.
- Reflect on how often you engage in these spiritual practices compared to other activities.

Set Spiritual Goals:

- Establish specific and achievable spiritual goals for yourself. These could be daily, weekly, or monthly goals.
- For example, you might decide to spend 15 minutes in prayer or meditation each morning, read a chapter from a sacred text every day, or attend a religious service regularly.

Evaluate Your Material Pursuits:

- Examine areas in your life where material pursuits might be overshadowing spiritual priorities.
- Ask yourself if certain material pursuits, such as excessive work hours, spending on unnecessary possessions, or other worldly desires, hinder your spiritual growth.

Make a Commitment:

- Based on your reflections and goals, commit to prioritizing the spiritual in your daily life.
- Share your commitment with a friend or family member who can offer support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 5

FAITH BEYOND SENSES: THROUGH FAITH, WE UNDERSTAND

The Word of God framed the worlds and everything that exists,

The invisible made the visible through the power the Word transmits,

Out of nothing, God's Word brought life,

Out of His love, God's Word promises eternal life.

For we live by faith, not by sight,

Trust in God, not your own eyesight,

Unlike your eyesight, in darkness, faith can see light,

Have it and conquer obstacles beyond your own might.

Your eyes can see through the day but barely through the night,

Faith can see through both, elevating to the highest height,

Through faith, we understand,

And by faith in God, we take a stand.

The Bible is our light and our lampstand,

For the power of God, none can withstand.

Let's have faith beyond senses, faith beyond lenses, faith beyond guesses,

And faith beyond human letters, words, and sentences.

Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

The phrase ‘were not made of things which do appear’ means that all things created by God were made by something that exists but cannot be seen by the optical apparatus. God created everything through His Word. And even though His Word is invisible, it has the most incredible power beyond your imagination.

Being made in God’s image and likeness, He designed us that way. He formed us so that for us to do anything, it must be conceived in the thought first. Scientists who try to disprove God say that God did not create the world because, for something to come to existence, it needs to be made by a physical, tangible raw material. They ignore the fact that you need to use your mind first and engage your thoughts before you even source for those raw materials. By saying that, they don’t contemplate how powerful and impactful spoken words are, although not seen. It takes tremendous effort to say there is no God.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV) – “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

God gave us five senses. The sense of sight, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, the sense of smell, and the sense of hearing. He gave us these senses to gather and respond to environmental information. These senses help us to perceive danger and avoid it. They also allow us to perceive good things and embrace them. These five senses aid almost every activity we do in life. However, faith is not dependent on these senses.

Faith is a sense that is above the five senses. As much as the five senses are essential, and we should use them, we should put faith above them. We should trust in the One who created the senses and not the senses themselves. Therefore, when God gives you a promise, look forward to that promise. Don’t consider what your eyes can see, what your ears can hear, what your hands can touch, or what your body can feel. Trust in God.

When the Israelites went to battle with Goliath, they had no faith. That is why they were frightened. When they looked at Goliath, they saw He was a giant, more prominent than everyone in size. When they heard stories about Goliath, they heard he was a champion and had a recorded history of winning wars. David knew he could defeat Goliath before fighting him. This is because in as

much as Goliath was enormous, his God was bigger. He knew he had an advantage that Goliath didn't have. The advantage was David trusted in God while Goliath trusted in his strength.

1 Samuel 17:36 (KJV) – "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

Lions and bears have bigger frames than the average human being. They are fiercer and physically stronger than humans. When we see such animals, the average man runs away from them because we know of the danger, they can do to us. David was no better than the rest of us. The only difference between him and the rest of us is that he had a courage that was not based on himself and his abilities but was based on God.

When he saw Goliath, he remembered his encounter with the lion and the bear and knew that God, who helped him defeat those two animals, would make him defeat Goliath too. When you apply faith, your faith increases. When you fail to use faith, your confidence will stagnate or decrease. David knew that the God in him was more powerful than the enemy he faced.

Even though the devil constantly brings us trouble, God is mightier than him because God's Word created the devil. Psalm 33:6 (KJV) – "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." The Word of God created everything. We should trust it.

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His Word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do."— Christ's Object Lessons, Page 363, Ellen G. White.

"For forty days, the host of Israel had trembled before the haughty challenge of the Philistine giant. Their hearts failed within them as they looked upon his massive form, in height measuring six cubits and a span. Upon his head was a helmet of brass, he was clothed with a coat of mail that weighed five thousand shekels, and he had greaves of brass upon his legs. The coat was made of plates of brass that overlaid one another, like the scales of a fish, and they were so closely joined that no dart or arrow could possibly penetrate the armor. At his back the giant bore a huge javelin, or lance, also of brass. "The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head

weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and one bearing a shield went before him." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 646.2, Ellen G. White.

We should believe that God will do according to His Word because He is a God who cannot lie. David believed God's Word when He said in Deuteronomy 28:7 (KJV) – "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways." He believed that God would make them overcome all battles since God wanted them to be above only and not beneath (Deuteronomy 28:13). He knew that God wanted to set them on high above all nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1).

God nurtured this strong faith in David through obedience to His commands. Faith is written on your mind when you obey God's commands, and fear is erased. The Bible says in Proverbs 28:1 (KJV) – "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." David was bolder than a lion, which is why he was able to kill a lion, a bear, and Goliath. Later on, in his reign as King, he was able to win all battles. "Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One who knows no failure." – Messages to Young People, Page 309.3, Ellen G. White.

2 Chronicles 20:12 (KJV) – "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

"Jehoshaphat was a man of courage and valor. For years he had been strengthening his armies and his fortified cities. He was well prepared to meet almost any foe; yet in this crisis he put not his trust in the arm of flesh. Not by disciplined armies and fenced cities, but by a living faith in the God of Israel, could he hope to gain the victory over these heathen who boasted of their power to humble Judah in the eyes of the nations." – Prophets and Kings, Page 198.4, Ellen G. White.

King Jehoshaphat and the kingdom of Judah were attacked by three armies, the people of Moab, Amon, and Mt Seir. By using his eyes, King Jehoshaphat saw that the three armies outnumbered them and were more powerful than his own army. However, Jehoshaphat did not rely on what his eyes saw (his senses); he relied on God. He did not fear the three armies he could see but trusted in God, whom he could not see.

"We have little idea of the strength that would be ours if we would connect with the source of all strength. We fall into sin again and again, and think it must always be so. We cling to our infirmities as if they were something to be proud of. Christ tells us that we must set our face as a flint if we would overcome. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree; and through the power He has given us, we may resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then let us not talk of our weakness and inefficiency, but of Christ and His strength. When we talk of Satan's strength, the enemy fastens his power more firmly upon us. When we talk of the power of the Mighty One, the enemy is driven back. As we draw near to God, He draws near to us…."- Messages to Young People, Page 105.1, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:27 (KJV) – "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Moses did not fear Pharaoh, whom he could see. He feared God, whom he could not see. The Israelite leader knew Pharaoh was mighty and could cause significant harm to him, but he knew that God was more powerful, and if he disobeyed Him, the harm caused by God would be far greater than what Pharaoh would do. He also knew that God had the power to deliver them from the hands of Pharaoh. He did not trust in his senses. He leaned on the one who created and sustains the senses.

John 20:29 (KJV) – "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Jesus told this to Thomas after he insisted that he needed to touch Him so that he could believe that He rose. Christ allowed the doubting Thomas to touch Him and later told him those words. Thomas did not trust God's Word when Jesus said, He would die and rise again after three days. The disciples, too, did not trust in God, despite seeing Jesus do all those signs and wonders. Jesus was grieved that despite walking with Him for three years, they still placed their senses above faith.

You may want to keep the Sabbath, but you don't see how you will make enough money to cater to your needs without working on Saturday. Don't rely on your senses; rely on God. A specific sin might have held you captive, for example, a lie that has gone too deep, and you may not know how to get out of it. You cannot see your way out of it. Ask God to free you from it. He is the way (John 14:6); He can make a way where there seems to be no way.

Use your senses but remember faith is the higher sense.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for giving me the five senses. Please help me to live by faith and not by sight. Please help me to trust in you more than I trust in anything else. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Write down all the instances in your life when you have seen the hand of God. Write as many as you can remember.

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CHAPTER 6

FAITH IN WORSHIP: IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Worship the Lord God in Spirit and Truth,

In everything you do, be faithful like Enoch, David, Job, and Ruth,

Like Abel, always present the best to Him,

And like a shining light that shines more and more, your light will never grow dim.

Endeavor to please the Most High King,

By making Him your first, last, and everything,

If you seek Him diligently, He will reward you,

With gifts that are everlasting, noble, and true.

In quiet moments, let your heart commune,

With the One who created the sun, moon, and the monsoon,

With open hands, lift your praises high,

To the Lord God, who reigns beyond the sky.

Embrace the wisdom from the ancient pages,

Scriptures that have withstood countless ages,

In every step, let love be your guide,

A reflection of the One who's always beside.

So, worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth,

From the dawn of youth to the aging booth,

In every chapter, on every page,

Feel His presence in your life at every stage.

Hebrews 11:4 (KJV) – "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God. Offering sacrifice is a form of worship. God accepted Abel's worship, while God rejected Cain's worship. God Himself testified of Abel's offering and considered him righteous. He did not testify of Cain's offering. We can see here that not all worship directed to God is acceptable by God.

Matthew 15:9 (KJV) – "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The above verse addresses people who claim to believe in God because those are the ones who worship. The verse doesn't say they don't worship God. Instead, it says they worship God in vain because they keep their commandments instead of God's commandments. Cain's worship was in vain because He did not do as God had commanded. God had instituted a sacrificial system where the blood of an animal (a lamb) had to be shed after Adam and Eve sinned. The lamb's blood was to symbolize the blood of Jesus.

In Genesis 3:7, when Adam and Eve sinned they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons to cover their nakedness. They were trying by their power to deal with the sin they had committed. They were attempting to save themselves. Adam and Eve acted like their firstborn, Cain, by bringing plants to God. As human beings, we cannot deal with sin by our own might. We need God's help. Genesis 3:21 (KJV) – "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

Here we can see that genuine and acceptable worship is directed by God. Once you realize this, you will worship God as He directs and not as you direct. Adam and Eve directed themselves to sew fig leaves and wore the aprons made for them after they realized they were naked. God had to remove the fig leaves that Adam and Eve used to cover themselves, and He covered them with coats of skins. You cannot sanctify yourself; you need God to sanctify you. You cannot save yourself; you need God to save you. You cannot direct yourself; you need God to direct you.

"The Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 61.5, Ellen G. White.

The coats of skin God provided Adam and Eve were better than those they provided for themselves. When they sewed fig leaves, they only thought of covering their nakedness. They did not know the sin they did also affected the climate. The once-perfect weather would no longer continue in that state; it would be subject to heat and cold. God knew this, so He covered them with coats of skin.

God's choice is always better than our own choice because He was the one who created us, and He understands the end from the beginning. Secondly, we can't know what the future holds. It is only God who knows the future. Therefore, from this example of Adam and Eve, we can see that when God gives us something, He is thinking about the present and the future. He gives us things with more value than our carnal heart's desire. Therefore the worship that God instructs is highly beneficial. The worship that we instruct is not valuable.

"The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence. And wherever, in the Bible, His claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is presented, there is cited evidence of His creative power. "All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5). "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One. Lift your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things." "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it: … I am the Lord; and there is none else" (Isaiah 40:25, 26; 45:18)." – Lift Him Up, Page 51, Ellen G. White.

God is the Creator of everything. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV) says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." The Bible tells us that the whole duty of man is to worship God. Whatever work, skill, or talent God has given you; He expects you to use it to worship Him because He is the Creator. Thus, your education will be highly blessed if you put God at the center. You need to pray before and after reading a book. Pray before you plan your timetable. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Pray before you do anything.

Your career will be blessed beyond measure if God is at the center of it. In short, God will bless everything you do because you acknowledge that He is the Creator and everything you do depends on Him.

Therefore, it will be great when you want to start a business; you consult God about which business name you should use. It will be highly profitable if you pray before designing the logo. Pray before writing down the vision, mission, and core values. Pray before going to network with people. Pray before approaching customers. Pray at each step of your business. This is because running your business is an act of worship.

As a child of God, everything you do, you should look at it as a form of worship, therefore do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If you do this, your work will surpass the works of others in excellence and others will be drawn to God.

When Cain saw that God had accepted Abel's offering and not his, he was angry. Genesis 4:6-7 (KJV) – "[6] And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? [7] If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" When God asked Cain this question, He gave him a second chance to reform and do what was right. He told Cain that if he wanted Him to accept his offering, He should do what was right by bringing God a lamb like Abel did.

Having established this, the question is, what type of worship does God accept?

John 4:24 (KJV) – "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." True worship must be in Spirit and Truth. Many Christian churches claim to worship God in Spirit but not in Truth through their many theatrics during church service, for example, shouting and people falling. Such that make those claims do not worship God in Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13).

Worshipping God in truth means your worship should be according to God's Word. Your worship needs to be in accordance with God's commands. If God says, "The Sabbath is the Seventh Day of the week (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Exodus 31:7; Exodus 23:12; Exodus 31:15; Exodus 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Hebrews 4:4, etc.)" and you go ahead and observe another day, your worship will not be in Truth because it is not in line with God's Word.

Worshipping God in Spirit means more than speaking in tongues. It means having all spiritual fruits. Therefore, when worshipping God, we need to exercise all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And what are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) – "22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Galatians 5:23 tells us that against these fruits, there is no law. This means there is no Truth/Word of God against all these mentioned fruits. We can conclude by saying Spirit and Truth are inseparable, and one who claims to worship God in one must also worship Him in the other. There is no way someone can worship God in Spirit and fail to worship Him in Truth, and there is no way someone can worship God in Truth and fail to worship Him in Spirit.

The first mentioned fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, which is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13 as the greatest gift of all. John 14:15 (KJV) says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Love is obeying God. Obeying God is loving God and loving our neighbors. The Israelites requested Aaron to make for them a god because Moses had delayed coming down from the mount. Aaron made them a god; after he made them a god, he fashioned an altar for that god. After doing these things, Aaron said in Exodus 32:5 – "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." God detested that worship because it was not as per His law. It broke the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:3; Exodus 20:4-6).

Leviticus 10:1-2 (NKJV) – "[1] Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. [2] So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

Nadab and Abihu were priests who showed irreverence to God by offering profane fire to Him. God got angry and killed them immediately.

Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, were corrupt in their service before God (1 Samuel 2:12-17). Unlike Nadab and Abihu, God did not kill them immediately. They were killed later in battle (1 Samuel 4:11). God hates irreverence and will punish irreverent ones if they don't repent. When we go to the presence of God, we must be reverent because even the sinless angels in heaven veil their faces when they are in the presence of God (Isaiah 6:2). If Holy angels cover their faces, how much should we do as sinful human beings?

Even though Belshazzar was a Pagan King, God punished him because he played with the vessels of the house of God. Things that are considered holy should not be meddled with. Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king, but he never played with the vessels of God's house. God trusted the vessels in Nebuchadnezzar's hands more than in Jehoiakim's hands (Daniel 1:1-2).

Some unbelievers or people we consider sinners have fear for God more than some Christians do. Therefore, as you worship, remember that you are in the presence of a Holy God. While in church, switch off your phone or put it in airplane mode. What you cannot do in front of your country's president or the presence of an earthly judge, don't do it before God. It doesn't matter how small your church is or how unattractive the church building looks. Please treat it with reverence because it is holy ground.

When Moses saw a burning bush, God commanded him to remove his shoes because it was holy ground. A bush is not an attractive site to admire. However, God decides what is holy, and the bush was holy then. Your church may be an unfinished building, a tent, or even an open space with no structure where you gather with friends to worship.

Treat it reverently wherever it is, as long as two or more people are gathered, it is holy ground. During the sanctuary time, people had to wash their hands and feet before entering the sanctuary. In other words, they had to be physically clean. When going to church, you ought to be better groomed than when going to a meeting with a high-level executive.

Exodus 28:2 (KJV) – "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty." Aaron's garments had the same color as the sanctuary's colors. Therefore, if you met Aaron going to the sanctuary, you would know he is going to church. His clothes had to reflect glory first, then beauty. When dressing up for church, many dress for beauty first, and we give no thought to glory.

Have a habit of praying before choosing the clothes to wear to church. Don't enter the church with shoes full of mud. We should ensure that the church is cleaner than our houses. If we do that we will show that we truly put God first.

Exodus 20:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." In these two verses, God is telling us that He has given us enough time (6 days which translates to most of the time) to do all we have to do, and He is only asking for a single day. We have all the time to do our activities, and the time God asks for compared to what He has given us is minimal.

Of the total 168 hours of the week, 144 are ours, and 24 are His. Do not talk about ungodly topics or have ungodly thoughts during Sabbath. You ought to be holy throughout the week because the

whole armor of God should be worn full-time, not just on the Sabbath. However, God allows you to do your money-generating activities and school-related duties during the week, but He does not allow you to do the same on Sabbath. Therefore, focus fully on God on the Sabbath.

Another fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy. When in the presence of God, no matter what we are going through, we should always be happy. Philippians 4:4 (KJV) – "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

Psalms 37:4 (KJV) – "Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." When going to church, do not be sad and gloomy. You need to look forward to going to church more than you look forward to going swimming or a concert or any other fun activity.

The same way you go to school early is how you should arrive early in church. If you arrive precisely on time when you go to school, arrive thirty minutes earlier when you go to church. When the preacher is preaching, enjoy hearing the Word of God. Take part in the singing with joy. Greet people with genuine happiness.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

"All heaven was represented to me as beholding and watching upon the Sabbath those who acknowledge the claims of the fourth commandment and are observing the Sabbath. Angels were marking their interest in, and high regard for, this divine institution. Those who sanctified the Lord God in their hearts by a strictly devotional frame of mind, and who sought to improve the sacred hours in keeping the Sabbath to the best of their ability, and to honor God by calling the Sabbath a delight—these the angels were specially blessing with light and health, and special strength was given them." – Counsels for the Church, Page 271.1, Ellen G. White.

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Ensure that you are peaceful during worship. Do not quarrel or fight anyone. Matthew 5:9 (KJV) – "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Matthew 5:23-24 (KJV) – "[23] Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Do not worship God before you solve a misunderstanding with someone.

When your heart is at peace, you will concentrate when worshipping. You need to exercise patience when worshipping, don't rush to complete a prayer but pray earnestly from your heart. Do not move in and out of the church during church service, especially when the pastor is preaching.

When you pray, and God has not granted your request yet, continue praying, don't stop. Be patient. You ought to be kind and good to everyone. Offer a helping hand where need be when you are worshipping. After the preacher has preached, complement them. Give a word of encouragement to whoever is conducting God's service or whoever seems afflicted. They may seem like simple words, but they can go a long way.

Exercise faithfulness, return the requested ten percent as tithe and an additional as an offering. God killed Ananias and Sapphira because of unfaithfulness (Acts 5:1-11). Be gentle when worshipping. Treat the holy things of God like the Bible gently. Don't run or shout in church.

The last-mentioned fruit is temperance, also called self-control. Exercise temperance. Eat less when you are going to worship, lest you sleep in church, or you fail to comprehend the message entirely. Pastor Elizabeth Mokoro says, "No spiritual battle is won on a full stomach." It can be great if you fast when worshipping but eat less if you can't fast.

When you love God and worship Him as He says, He will be pleased with you.

Psalms 37:4 (KJV) – "Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God,

As we explore the essence of worship in Spirit and Truth, we come before You with hearts of gratitude. Teach us to worship You Faithfully.

You are the Most High King, and we commit to making You our first, last, and everything. Let our hearts commune with You, and in every action, may our lives reflect true worship. Guide us to sanctify ourselves, seeking Your wisdom in all we do. May our daily activities be avenues of worship, bringing glory to Your name.

Cultivate in us the fruits of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. As we worship, may these fruits manifest in our lives, impacting those around us. We ask for Your guidance and blessings as we strive to make our lives a continual offering, a testimony of Your love and grace.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Reflect on your worship. Is it in Spirit and Truth?
2. Reflect on your life. Are you living in Spirit and Truth?
3. In your journal or notebook, write down the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.
4. At the end of each day, evaluate how you have used each of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.

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CHAPTER 7

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

"The just shall live by faith," the scriptures say,

Through trials and tribulations, we find our way,

For God is the same, yesterday, tomorrow and today,

The path of the just keeps shining brighter every day.

"The just shall live by faith," we declare,

Our souls ignited, fueled by prayer,

Even in the darkest times, when life seems unfair,

God is always with us no need to despair.

For faith is not just words we say,

But a steadfast belief in a brighter day,

Our earnest cries in God's hands, we lay,

Loving God and everybody till our hair turns grey.

The just shall live by faith; we'll proclaim,

And find salvation in His Holy name,

A tight relationship with God, our highest aim,

Not riches, honor, good life and fame.

Hebrews 10:38 (KJV) – “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

The original Greek word for the word ‘Just’ is Dikaioj. Dikaioj means righteous, observing divine laws, upright and virtuous. This word refers to those whose way of thinking, feeling and acting wholly conforms to the will of God.

The original Greek word for the word ‘Faith’ is Pistij. Pistij refers to a strong, unwavering conviction that God exists and is the Creator of all things.

Therefore, if we combine these two words, we can conclude that Hebrews 10:38 means one wholly conformed to God's will, shall live by his firm conviction that God exists and is the Creator. Therefore, if such a person has that conviction, he will not worry and will not have anxiety because he depends on God, who is the provider since God is the Creator of everything.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (KJV) - “[1] All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. [2] And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. [3] And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

We are all sustained by God's Word, whether we are aware of it or not. Unfortunately, we tend to think that our jobs, skills, talents and connections are responsible for our sustenance. Some have sunk into depression because they were expecting to get a job once they acquired a particular certification or attained a new skill and haven't been able to get one.

There are extreme cases where some have gone to the extent of committing suicide. Acts 17:28 (KJV) – "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." It is through God's Word that we come to life, and it is His Word that sustains life. Eating healthy, exercising, career, skills, and connections have their place, but it is God's Word that sustains us.

God had to take the Israelites through the wilderness experience for them to understand that. There was no food in the wilderness, and there were no other communities with which they could trade. They had to depend on the daily manna that fell from heaven. God took them through this lesson to make them know that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Deuteronomy 8:16 (KJV) – "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;"

God was going to make the Israelites prosperous in the end. He was going to take them to the Promised Land, a land filled with milk and honey. Before He took them there, He had to take them through a special school in the wilderness to teach them necessary lessons that would be useful to them in the wilderness and the Promised Land.

In the wilderness, the Israelites were required to have faith. This faith was essential for them in future times of prosperity as it was in times of adversity. Somebody told me that when she got her job that is when her spiritual life started declining. She said she would rarely go to church.

The Lord God might be taking you through a wilderness experience to ensure that your faith is firmly grounded. He takes you through certain circumstances to ensure that you will stick to Him and be constantly aware that you depend on Him alone. Only a few Israelites made it to the Promised Land. The school of faith is sometimes tough to graduate because it requires a firm belief in the invisible.

Matthew 4:3-4 (KJV) – "[3] And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. [4] But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The Devil knows human beings trust visible things more than invisible things. He knows we are more inclined to material things than spiritual things. Therefore, he cunningly uses that knowledge to deceive us into temptation and rob us of our destinies.

Satan may give you a job that pays a good amount of money but is not within your purpose to make you not work on your God-given purpose. He does this to bribe you because he knows that if you work on your purpose, you are going to be great, and you are going to uplift God's name.

His work is to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), and he is a master in robbing and destroying people's destinies.

Pastor Randy Skeete narrated how hard it was for him to leave his counseling job and start preaching, but he still managed to do it. His sermons have inspired millions around the world. He would not have achieved that feat if he were still at his job.

The Devil knew that Jesus was hungry, and so he came to Him immediately after He had finished fasting. Typically, when you fast or when you embark on a heavy spiritual activity such as ministering on a revival week, the Devil brings trials towards the end of that activity or immediately after you have finished doing it. He may bring temptations. He may even bring sickness.

The Devil knew the greatest need of Jesus at that time was to get some food. Most times, when people end their fast, the first thing they look for is food to satisfy their hunger. Therefore, when the Devil tempted Jesus, his first temptation leveraged Jesus' immediate need.

There were stones in the place where Jesus was. When the tempter said, "Command that these stones be made bread (Matthew 4:3)." Satan deliberately pointed to those stones so that Jesus could look at them. He did the same thing to Eve. He was at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, disguising himself in the body of the most beautiful and cleverest animal at that time which was the serpent.

The Bible says in Genesis 3:6 (KJV) – “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

The fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil first appealed to Eve's sense of sight, causing her to fall into temptation. The Devil tries to appeal to various senses in a human being to make his tricks effective. Not only did he appeal to Eve's sense of sight, but he also appealed to her through his conspiratorial words.

Proverbs 7:16-21 (KJV) – “[16] I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. [17] I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. [18] Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. [19] For the goodman is

not at home, he is gone a long journey: [20] He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. [21] With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."

The woman described in this context appeals to the man's sense of sight (decked her bed with coverings of tapestry, carved works and fine linen). She appeals to his sense of smell (she perfumed her bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon) and his sense of hearing through the words she tells him. The Bible says in Proverbs 7:22 (KJV) – "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;" Sin is usually packaged most attractively, but its wages are death (Romans 6:23).

Satan succeeded when tempting Eve because Eve trusted in what she saw (the fruit) more than in what she didn't see (God's Word/commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Therefore, when Satan went to Jesus, he used the same strategy. He didn't tell Jesus to make bread appear from nowhere.

The Devil pointed to the stones that were near Christ. He thought that if he could make Christ look at them while cleverly using words that attacked Christ's ego, he would make Him fall. He did not succeed because Jesus' reliance on God's Word was more potent than on material things. Jesus trusted in God's Word (the invisible) more than he trusted in bread.

Therefore, Jesus answered the Devil by quoting a Bible verse which says, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." He understood that it was the Word of God which created bread. He chose to live by faith, not by sight.

The just shall live by faith.

Let us consider a few Biblical examples of righteous men who lived by faith:

Isaac

Genesis 26:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. [2] And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: [3] Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto

thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father."

Genesis 26:12-14 (KJV) – "[12] Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. [13] And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: [14] For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him."

God commanded Isaac to stay in the land of the Philistines. Isaac wanted to go to Egypt to find greener pastures because where he was, the famine was severe. God commanded him not to go to Egypt but sojourn in that land. He promised Isaac that if he obeyed Him, He would bless him and his seed too. Isaac heed God's voice and dwelt in that land. In the same year, when everybody in that place encountered famine, God blessed Isaac that he received a hundredfold of what he sowed. He made him have possession of flocks and herds and a great store of servants.

By obeying God, Isaac portrayed faith. He lived by faith because his dependence was not on the rain or what the ground could offer but on what God could offer. He understood that it is God who created rain, it is God who created soil, and He can make fertile a place aggravated by famine.

Worry should not be in the vocabulary of a Christian. When God commands you to go somewhere, hasten. Do not be frightened by the insecurity of that place or any other negative factor of which you have heard. Do not worry because God has sent you on a mission to a site goaded by drought. Have faith and believe you are in the hands of the Creator and provider of everything.

Believe that when you are on God's side, no one or nothing can be against you, for He is your ultimate protector, your shield and defender. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many to lose their jobs. However, many received financial breakthroughs and financial freedom in that period.

Isaac received incredible blessings when he was in the midst of a land that had famine. This shower of blessings upon his life made the Philistines to be afraid of him and to know that he indeed serves a mighty God. His blessings served as a testimony to the unbelievers. God intends your testimony to pull more people to Him. That is why He wants you to live by faith.

Elijah

1 Kings 17:2-6 (KJV) – "[2] And the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, [3] Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. [4] And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. [5] So he went and did according unto the Word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. [6] And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

"Among the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, there dwelt in the days of Ahab a man of faith and prayer whose fearless ministry was destined to check the rapid spread of apostasy in Israel. Far removed from any city of renown, and occupying no high station in life, Elijah the Tishbite nevertheless entered upon his mission confident in God's purpose to prepare the way before him and to give him abundant success. The word of faith and power was upon his lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to rebuke sin and press back the tide of evil. And while he came to the people as a reprover of sin, his message offered the balm of Gilead to the sin-sick souls of all who desired to be healed." – Prophets and Kings, Page 119.1, Ellen G. White.

There was a drought in the land of Israel because God had cursed it during King Ahab's time due to idol worship. However, Elijah was a servant of God. He was faithful to God amidst the significant opposition he faced since the majority of the people in the place where he was worshipped idols.

God punished the entire nation and blocked the rains from pouring on the land. He gave them this punishment out of love so that they may change their ways and return to Him. God did not allow His servant Elijah to suffer. Therefore, He commanded the ravens to feed him during that trying period. A perfect example of the just living by faith.

1 Kings 17:7-9 (KJV) – "[7] And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. [8] And the Word of the LORD came unto him, saying, [9] Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

“In this poverty-stricken home the famine pressed sore, and the pitifully meager fare seemed about to fail. The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities. But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 130.1, Ellen G. White.

When the brook dried up, most of us would think that the drying up of the brook was the end of Elijah. We would believe that God has run out of options because we usually assume that earthly circumstances limit God. God is not limited to worldly situations. He goes above and beyond those situations.

The Creator waited for the brook to dry up entirely so that He could provide Elijah with another option out of his endless options. He would have sent Elijah to a wealthy person, but He did not do that. Instead, He sent him to a widow with only one meal left.

When God decides to bless you, He may not use the person you are expecting as a channel for that blessing. He may end up using someone whom you did not even imagine. Therefore, it is essential to respect everyone. Those who you think you might not benefit from are the ones who might be holding your most desired blessings. The widow had only one meal left for her and her son.

God used Elijah to multiply that meal, so it never ran out. God did a mighty miracle that Elijah, the widow and her son were blessed. If the widow did not obey God's voice and acted by faith by giving Elijah that meal, she would have probably eaten that one meal with her son and died because there was nothing else left. Her righteous action resulted in her never running out of food to eat. The just shall live by faith.

Joseph

Genesis 39:2-4 (KJV) – “[2] And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. [3] And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. [4] And Joseph found grace in his

sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."

"Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of the king's guard, in whose service he remained for ten years. He was here exposed to temptations of no ordinary character. He was in the midst of idolatry. The worship of false gods was surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, supported by the wealth and culture of the most highly civilized nation then in existence. Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to God. The sights and sounds of vice were all about him, but he was as one who saw and heard not. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects. The desire to gain the favor of the Egyptians could not cause him to conceal his principles. Had he attempted to do this, he would have been overcome by temptation; but he was not ashamed of the religion of his fathers, and he made no effort to hide the fact that he was a worshiper of Jehovah." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 214.2, Ellen G. White.

Joseph was a righteous young man before God, but God allowed his brothers to send him as an enslaved person to Egypt. God is omnipotent. Therefore, He had the power to block that event from happening, but he did not do that. He allowed them to throw him into a pit and also allowed them to sell him to Egypt as an enslaved person.

If we had faced the situation that Joseph, many of us would curse God and probably leave Him. We would reckon how we have been faithful in returning tithe, serving in the church and diligently spreading the gospel. We would question why God has allowed such to happen to us despite us being faithful in his service. We would think evil has won over good because of that one situation. Such worries would becloud our minds but not Joseph's.

When taken to Egypt, Joseph remained faithful to God. He was devoted to the extent that his pagan master saw God was with him. As a slave, one has fewer rights, but the Bible records that Joseph found grace in the sight of his master and was made overseer over Potiphar's house. In other words, he got more rights than he intended to. The just shall live by faith.

Genesis 39:21-23 (KJV) – "[21] But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. [22] And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the

doer of it. [23] The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."

Joseph was imprisoned because of a false accusation that Potiphar's wife made against him. However, he was faithful to God even behind the prison walls. He did not give up on God, and God did not give up on him. God gave Joseph favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison and made him commit everything to Joseph's hands.

While in prison, Joseph did not stop working on his purpose. He used his gift diligently by interpreting the dreams of the prisoners. God was with him and caused everything he did to prosper while still in that prison. Later, he was taken to Pharaoh to interpret a dream that nobody in Egypt could interpret.

Pharaoh marveled at Joseph's gift that he gave him the highest position in the land in that only Pharaoh was more elevated than him. He gave him the position of Prime Minister. It was peculiar for Joseph to get that position because he was a foreigner, at the same time, enslaved. The just shall live by faith.

Daniel

Daniel 1:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. [9] Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not partake of the King's meat. Nebuchadnezzar was not a democratic king who would allow people to easily have their way of doing things.

The Bible says in Daniel 5:19 (KJV) – "And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down."

Nebuchadnezzar killed whoever he wanted, and nobody could question him. Daniel knew this but chose death rather than disobeying God's commands. God gave him favour with the prince of the eunuchs, and he allowed Daniel to eat whatever he wanted. The just shall live by faith.

Daniel 6:21-22 (KJV) – "[21] Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. [22] My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

"God did not prevent Daniel's enemies from casting him into the lions' den; He permitted evil angels and wicked men thus far to accomplish their purpose; but it was that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked, and the defeat of the enemies of truth and righteousness more complete.... Through the courage of this one man who chose to follow right rather than policy, Satan was to be defeated, and the name of God was to be exalted and honored." – Conflict and Courage, Page 255.4, Ellen G. White.

Lions scare us. They don't scare God. God created lions. Therefore, He has the ability to control them, and He has the power to destroy them. Daniel chose to fear the Creator and not the creature. It did not frighten him when a decree was passed that whoever worshipped another God besides the king would be thrown into a den of lions. He continued praying to the almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, King Darius and the Lions. He was thrown to the lion's den, but the lions did not harm him. However, after he left the lion's den, his enemies were thrown in, and the lions devoured them. The just shall live by faith.

Martha

John 11:21-22 (KJV) – "[21] Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. [22] But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

"Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver. Therefore, Christ remained away. He suffered the enemy to exercise his power, that He might drive him back, a conquered foe. He permitted Lazarus to pass under the dominion of death; and the suffering sisters saw their brother laid in the grave. Christ knew that as they looked on the dead face of their brother their faith in their Redeemer would be severely tried. But He knew that because of the struggle through which they were now passing their faith would shine forth with far greater power. He suffered every pang of sorrow that they endured. He loved them no less

because He tarried; but He knew that for them, for Lazarus, for Himself, and for His disciples, a victory was to be gained." – The Desire of Ages, Page 528.2, Ellen G. White.

Martha and her sister Mary were friends with Jesus. They had earlier called for Jesus to heal their brother Lazarus, but Jesus seemed to 'delay' as He was busy ministering to other people. Sometimes we get angry at God and lose hope when we see Him blessing others when we have been faithful to Him, and He seems to have forgotten us. Martha had profound faith in God. She truly believed that God is life and all life flows from Him.

Therefore, she told Jesus that Lazarus would not have died if He had been there. She added by saying that she knows all hope is not lost and whatsoever Jesus would ask of God; God will give it to Him. This level of belief is relatively uncommon among us Christians.

We often think that because we have reached the end of the road, God has also reached the end. Many believe it is God's will for Christians to suffer and be subjected to all kinds of doom while living in this world. Martha saw possibilities amid impossibility. Jesus heard her cry and raised Lazarus from the dead. The just shall live by faith.

Lazarus

Luke 11:41-44 (KJV) – "[41] Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. [42] And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. [43] And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. [44] And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

"Among the most steadfast of Christ's disciples was Lazarus of Bethany. From their first meeting his faith in Christ had been strong; his love for Him was deep, and he was greatly beloved by the Saviour. It was for Lazarus that the greatest of Christ's miracles was performed. The Saviour blessed all who sought His help; He loves all the human family, but to some He is bound by peculiarly tender associations. His heart was knit by a strong bond of affection to the family at

Bethany, and for one of them His most wonderful work was wrought." – The Desire of Ages, Page 524.1, Ellen G. White.

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) – "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness." The Lord neither hastens nor delays. His time is always right. He did not minister to Lazarus when he was sick. He ministered to him when he died, after days passed by, and his body had begun to rot.

The Bible says that Jesus loved Lazarus and his family, too (John 11:5). Lazarus' family was quite familiar with Jesus because they had spent a reasonable amount of time with Him, welcoming Him to their home. We may wonder why God seems blind and deaf to us while we are always praying and worshipping Him. God is not blind nor deaf to us. He listens to our most resounding cries, and the pain we feel pains Him more than it pains us.

Lazarus was faithful to God before he died. His hope was not lost in death because Jesus rose him from the dead. God has victory over death. The just shall live by faith. If they live by faith, they will not be scared by anything, including death, because God has conquered death. Psalm 23:4 (KJV) – "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Tabitha

Acts 9:36-40 (KJV) – "[36] Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did. [37] And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. [38] And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. [39] Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. [40] But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up."

“In Joppa there was a Dorcas, whose skillful fingers were more active than her tongue. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the wants of both classes. And when Dorcas died, the church in Joppa realized their loss. It is no wonder that they mourned and lamented, nor that warm teardrops fell upon the inanimate clay. She was of so great value that by the power of God she was brought back from the land of the enemy, that her skill and energy might still be a blessing to others.” – Welfare Ministry, Page 142.1, Ellen G. White.

Tabitha showed diligence through her service to the people. She was full of good deeds, always offering alms. She was not aware of the blessings God had in store for her. She did whatever she did out of love for God and people. Illness caught her, and she died. Her death would have formed a perfect narrative for Satan and his agents to go around preaching how good people end up in failure.

The people whom Tabitha ministered to wept for her because of the kind deeds she did for them. Peter came and prayed and, through the power of God, rose her from the dead. It was a great miracle and a blessing to Tabitha and the people. It was an unexpected blessing. The just shall live by faith.

Jehoshaphat

2 Chronicles 20:12 (KJV) – “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”

“Jehoshaphat was a man of courage and valor. For years he had been strengthening his armies and his fortified cities. He was well prepared to meet almost any foe; yet in this crisis he put not his trust in the arm of flesh. Not by disciplined armies and fenced cities, but by a living faith in the God of Israel, could he hope to gain the victory over these heathen who boasted of their power to humble Judah in the eyes of the nations.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 198.4, Ellen G. White.

“With confidence Jehoshaphat could say to the Lord, “Our eyes are upon thee.” For years he had taught the people to trust in the One who in past ages had so often interposed to save His chosen

ones from utter destruction; and now, when the kingdom was in peril, Jehoshaphat did not stand alone; “all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.” Verse 13. Unitedly they fasted and prayed; unitedly they besought the Lord to put their enemies to confusion, that the name of Jehovah might be glorified.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 200.1, Ellen G. White.

Jehoshaphat knew they were few because three mighty armies were coming against them. He knew that their military capacity was inadequate to counter those three armies. He considered not the weakness they had when compared to these three armies. His focus was on the almighty God, the possessor of all power. He took his weakness to God and before God acknowledged their limitations when he said, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."

In the midst of confusion, weakness and trials, we realize how powerless we are and how highly dependent we are on God. God, through his servant, commanded them to form a choir. When the armies of Moab, Amon and Mount Seir came to battle them, they met a choir singing praises to God. The music from the choir was so powerful that they ended up killing themselves out of confusion. The just shall live by faith.

In one of his sermons, Pastor Mark Finley preached about certain Seventh-Day Adventist university students in Brazil who were denied permission to sit for exams on another day since their exams were set on Sabbath. The students held firmly to their beliefs. They met up with a certain Seventh-Day Adventist tycoon and told them of their ordeal. The man decided to buy the whole university to change that one rule. As a result, the students were allowed to have their exams on a weekday.

In His book, When God Says Remember, Pastor Mark talks about other students who were denied the chance to sit for exams on another day besides the Sabbath. Exams were done on Sabbath without the few students who chose to put God's Word above the professors' word. Later that day, when the professor went home from school, he met robbers who stole his briefcase. The briefcase carried the students' exam papers. It was too late to set other exams and have the students sit for another one. Therefore, the school ruled that they would use the results of the students’ previous assessments as the final results. The just shall live by faith.

“The faith that strengthened Habakkuk and all the holy and the just in those days of deep trial was the same faith that sustains God's people today. In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power. Day by day, through faith in God, his hope and courage may be renewed. “The just shall live by his faith.” – Conflict and Courage, Page 242, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 10:38 (KJV) – “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

In gratitude for the wisdom found in Your Word, we come before You with humble hearts. As we reflect on the truth that "the just shall live by faith," may we be strengthened in our trust and reliance on You.

Grant us the courage to walk in faith, even when the path is unclear, knowing that Your promises are steadfast. May our lives be a testament to Your grace, and may we find peace in living justly through the unwavering foundation of faith.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Activity

List situations where you have seen God’s hand in your life. Thank God for them.

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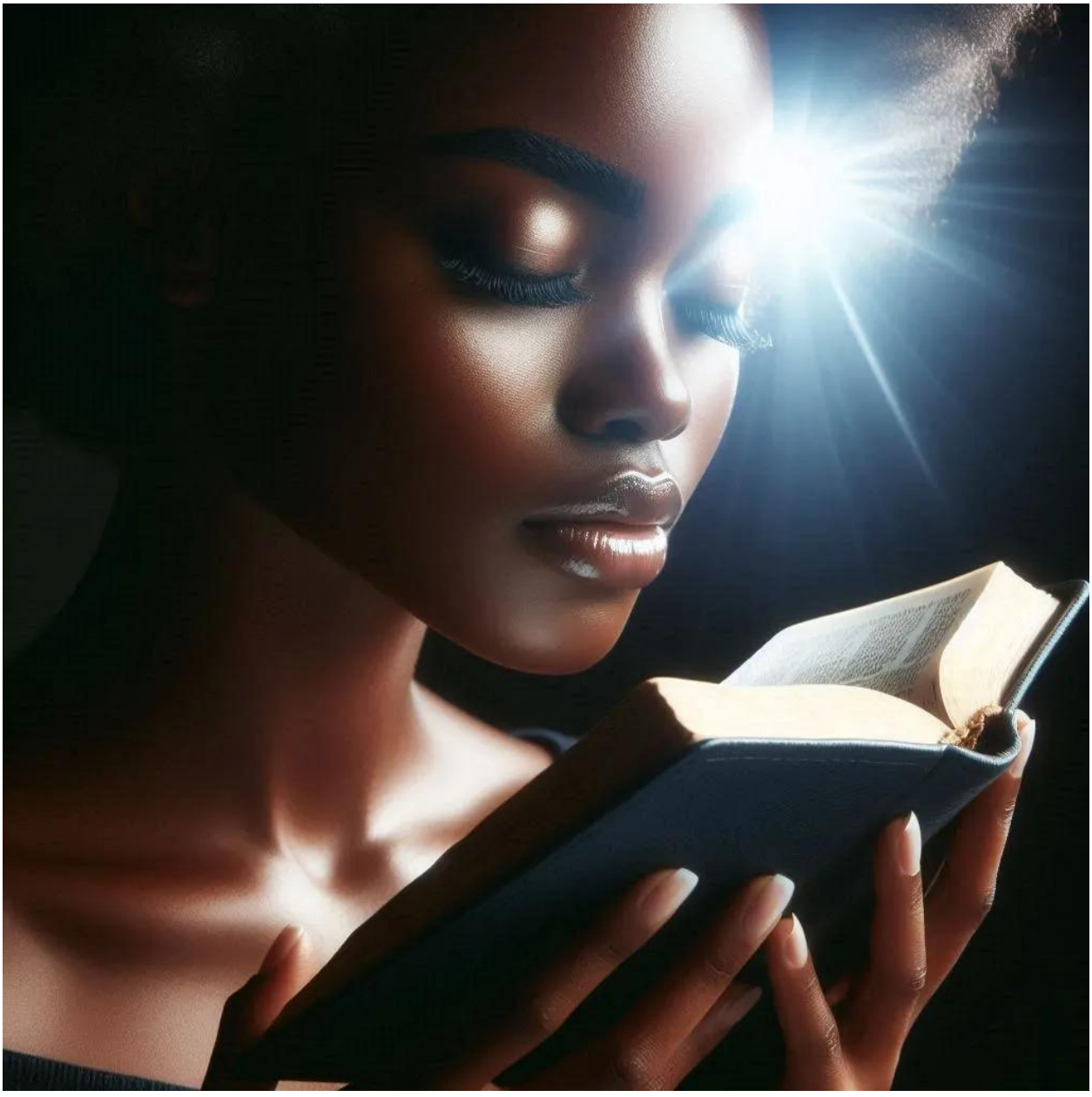
CHAPTER 8

FAITH IN GOD GIVES YOU TRUE IDENTITY



Peeling off the mask of sin is the Lord's work of sanctification,

Having complete faith in Him, will reveal to us our true identification,

Jesus removes the dust and rust within our hearts in purification,

Leaving the life of sin and living in God's divine affection.

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, the son of honor,

Lived in dishonor, blind and begging in a street corner,

He heard Jesus passing, he believed and cried out to his true owner,

When people tried to stop him, he cried louder, listening to no scorner.

Have mercy on me, Son of David, crying out to the Messiah,

He could not help himself; he sought a power that's higher,

He needed God's help to change the situation that was dire,

Faith in the Highest God can light water with fire.

Your faith has healed you, Jesus said to the once blind man,

Faith in God, the best remedy, if only we would learn,

What you cannot currently do, simply believe that you can,

Faith will make you cross oceans with no boat, have faith like the blind man.

Mark 10:46-52 (KJV) - “46 And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

The name "Bartimaeus" is a compound of two elements: "Bar" and "Timaeus." "Bar" is an Aramaic word meaning "son of." "Timaeus" is a Greek name meaning "honored" or "highly prized." Thus, "Bartimaeus" means "son of Timaeus." Son of Timaeus means “son of honor” or “son of one who is highly prized.”

Names have significance. For a good majority of people, the names they have been given depict their character. Sometimes, one may have a good name with a noble meaning, but his character and personality oppose that name. When that person turns from his wicked ways and gives his life to Christ, God shows that person their true identity. As a result, that person becomes what God intended him to be.

Talking of identity, let us take a glimpse into the story of John the Baptist:

Luke 1:10-13 (KJV) - “10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

God through His angel commanded Zacharias that his child should be named John. God has more authority over a child more than the parent. Parents should allow God to take control over their children’s lives. They should realize that they are but a vessel that connects the child to God.

Therefore, they should not lead the children contrariwise to God's commandments. The most key role of a parent in a child's life is to communicate God's Word to the child. The parents should do this to the child right from the womb.

Parents should bring up the child in accordance with God's divine law. They should take heed of everything that God tells them concerning the child, including the special instructions that God has given them concerning that specific child. The identity of the child should be gotten from God and not from the parents. Therefore, even when naming that child, before seeking the rules of tradition, or naming them after the person whom you loved most, one should seek God's guidance on how to name the child.

Luke 1:57-64 (KJV) - "[57] Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. [58] And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. [59] And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. [60] And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. [61] And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. [62] And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. [63] And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, his name is John. And they marveled all. [64] And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God."

God gave the child the identity John. In Hebrew, the name John means "God is gracious." The relatives, neighbors and friends of Elizabeth and Zacharias suggested that the child should be named Zacharias after his father. The name Zacharias means "God remembers."

Both names John and Zacharias have a righteous meaning. However, the meaning each name possesses is different. Your parents' identity is not yours. You should identify as part of the family you were born or brought up in, but you should realize that you are a unique person.

Family and friends wanted John to be like his father, but God wanted John to be John. John's father Zacharias was a righteous man for he was a priest, but God had a different purpose for John the Baptist (John 1:15-17). Parents do great harm to their children by comparing them with other children. Quit telling your children things like, "why don't you be like so and so?" You need to

realize that the child is unique and try your best through God's help to bring out the best version of that child.

Sometimes when God shows you your identity, He may retain your current name. Other times, He may give you a new name. He changed Abram's name to Abraham. Abram was quite a good name for it meant "exalted father" or "high father," but Abraham was a better name as it meant "father of many" or "father of a multitude." Abram had lived for seventy-five years with that name but when God called him, He gave him a new name.

Some people have been given false identities by their ethnicities, their traditions, their parents, relatives, friends, enemies, countries, towns, and neighborhoods among other societal categorizations. Some have allowed the sins they indulge in to define who they are. We should know that God's knowledge of us is beyond everyone else's. People in the world, including those closest to you, know you from the basis of what they have seen you doing or what they have heard you saying.

If someone sees you stealing, that person will know you as a thief. If someone has seen you failing primary and high school exams, it will be difficult for that person to picture you passing university examinations.

A common belief among many people is that their mothers are the ones who know them best. This belief may be true to a certain extent because often it is your mother who has seen you do most of the things that you have done. Mothers can accurately predict how their children think to a certain level.

However, we should understand that our mothers and by large our parents are human beings and have certain limitations concerning their knowledge about us. For example, our parents do not know everything we do in secret, especially when we reach the age of teenage hood and beyond.

Our parents do not possess the ability to listen to our silent prayers. Our parents can physically identify us based on our outer skin, our voices, modes of dressing and other physical attributes that appeal to the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste).

When shown a photograph of us amid other people, we can be able to know where we are in that photograph by looking at the physical appearance of the people in the photo. If we were shown the

same photograph without the outer skin but with the inner skeletons and asked to identify which skeleton is ours, I do not think anyone would be able to identify themselves. I do not think that there is a parent who can easily identify their child's skeleton without special DNA tests being done. God can identify you, beyond your outer skin.

God knows each part of your inner body and how each cell is distinguished in you from the billions of people in the world, past, present, and future. When a group of people get burned today (God forbid) and their ashes get mixed up, God can identify those people amidst those ashes. He can take those ashes, join them together to their respective people and bring all those people to life again.

Exodus 31:13 (KJV) - "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." The Sabbath commandment reminds you that it is God who sanctifies you. You cannot sanctify yourself.

The closer you get to God, the more He purifies you. His work of purification removes all the stains covering your identity. Thus, making God's image on you and in you to be clearer. It is like taking your white garments and rolling them in brown colored mud. When you look at those garments and when someone else looks at them, they will be convinced that those garments are brown in color.

However, when one takes the same clothes and soaks them in a bleaching detergent and thoroughly washes them, they get back to their original white color. That is what happens when you get close to God. Through, His Word, God does a magnificent work to define you. He does this through sanctifying you.

God giving a person his identity is evidenced in the story of Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus' name meant "son of honor," but his state of blindness caused him not to live in full honor as God intended him to. The Bible records that he sat down begging on the streets (Matthew 10:46). Some insensitive people might have mocked and ridiculed him. Some people might have even taken advantage of him because of his state of blindness.

When he was blind, he would often hear people describing how beautiful something is, but he had no privilege to see what was being described. He felt disadvantaged in such situations; thus, he

lived his life wishing he could see. In other words, he lived his life wishing he could do what he was not able to do at that present moment.

In his song, "When I was a boy," Kenyan Gospel singer Reuben Kigame who stated that he became blind at age three says, "Sometimes I wish I could see." This is the wish of every sick and disabled person. They wish they could be fully functional. Bartimaeus wished the same.

As he was by the highway side begging, Bartimaeus heard Jesus of Nazareth passing by and he began to cry out for Jesus to have mercy on him (Mark 10:47). He began to cry out because he believed in Jesus. He believed that Jesus is God that is why he cried out to Him to have mercy on him, for it is God alone who can forgive sins.

Many people told him to hold his peace, but he was righteously stubborn and cried out more. He did not listen to the voice and the noise of the majority even though he was only one person. Instead, he did what was righteous.

Sometimes and often when most people are against you, you may be inclined to think that they are right. Since they are more than you, they may outsmart you in arguments, giving you all the 'smart' (logical and sound) reasons not to do what God has called you to do. They may advise you to do the bare minimum at work, stating that human beings will not appreciate you no matter how well you work.

Human beings may not appreciate you, but God will surely appreciate you and reward you (Hebrews 11:6) because God is not a robber. He is no respecter of people (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; Acts 10:34-35), but He is a respecter of every righteous deed done by a person regardless of that person's ethnic or religious background. If an unbeliever does a righteous deed, God blesses that righteous act as He did with Rahab (Hebrews 11:31).

People at work may tell you that if you want to get promoted, you should engage in office politics. If you are in business, people may advise you to sell your products at exorbitant prices if you want to get rich quickly. If you are in school, people may tell you that the only way to pass school examinations is through cheating in exams or other fraudulent academic activities. People will do their best to discourage you from following your God-given purpose which will give you more freedom, in exchange for temporary financial security.

In Luke 10:49, when Jesus heard the blind man crying, He did not go where the blind man was even though He could see where Bartimaeus was. Instead, He commanded him to be called. It was less challenging for Jesus to go to the blind man than for the blind man to go to Jesus. Jesus sent people to go to Bartimaeus.

Jesus sending those people gave them the opportunity to be blessed. When Jesus sends you on a mission, do not hesitate, because that is an opportunity He is giving you to receive blessings. Agreeing to go for His mission is an act of faith and faith always pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

Jesus can come to you directly, but He does not always do that. Sometimes, He involves and engages other people so that they may get blessed too. He may also send people to you to test your faith, to test if you can truly recognize and discern His voice.

The people whom Jesus sent faithfully passed the message to Bartimaeus. When Bartimaeus heard this, he did not complain of how he could not see the road leading to where Jesus was. Instead, he arose and followed the voice of Jesus, probably tracing it or the people who were sent by Jesus helped him get to where Jesus was. It might have been quite challenging for him to get there but he finally got there (Luke 10:50).

Bartimaeus told Jesus his request (Luke 10:51. He believed that Jesus could restore his sight. This is quite rare as many disabled people (especially those who are disabled since birth) view their conditions as permanent. Bartimaeus understood the condition he had was terrible and troublesome, but he believed the power of Jesus was more powerful and eternal than the condition which seemed permanent.

Jesus was delighted by Bartimaeus faith. He commended him and healed him (Luke 10:52). Christ told Bartimaeus, “Your faith has healed you.” Faith in God is the greatest remedy we need for our healing. It goes above and beyond all medical research ever done by human beings. God rewards and favors those who show faith in Him. He does not do the same to those who show disbelief.

Out of His mercy, God may give them what they need to survive in life, but He will not go to leaps and bounds to give them the great treasures of faith. Faith is the key that is needed to unlock the most valuable treasures. The key is handed to you by God. It is your personal choice whether to use it or not.

“Throngs of people who possess their sight are passing to and fro, but they have no desire to see Jesus. One look of faith would touch His heart of love, and bring them the blessings of His grace; but they know not the sickness and poverty of their souls, and they feel no need of Christ. Not so with the poor blind man. His only hope is in Jesus. As he waits and watches, he hears the tread of many feet, and he eagerly inquires, what means this noise of travel? The by-standers answer that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” With the eagerness of intense desire, he cries, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” They try to silence him, but he cries the more vehemently, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” This appeal is heard. His persevering faith is rewarded. Not only is physical sight restored, but the eyes of his understanding are opened. In Christ he sees his Redeemer, and the Sun of Righteousness shines into his soul. All who feel their need of Christ as did blind Bartimeus, and who will be as earnest and determined as he was, will, like him, receive the blessing which they crave.” - Sons and Daughters of God, Page 126, Ellen G. White.

After Bartimaeus received his sight, he followed Jesus (Luke 10:52). Following Jesus proved that he appreciated what Jesus had done for him. He wanted to feel more of His wonderful love. He wanted to witness more of His wondrous works. There is more beyond the blessings that Jesus has already given you.

People make a catastrophic error when they leave God after God has blessed them when God gives them what they had been asking from Him for a long time. When we leave God after He has blessed us, we face the danger of going back to the former terrible condition which He redeemed us from.

Some people often say that such astonishing miracles like restoration of sight to blind men was only possible in the Bible days and it is not possible now. Some believe that the miracles that Jesus did in those days were possible since Jesus was physically present at the situation.

John 20:29 (KJV) - "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The people who lived in the time of Jesus had the privilege to physically see Jesus and go to Him to get healed. Since they had the privilege to physically see Him, it did not require them to have a lot of faith compared to now when we do not see Him.

Reading John 20:29, we see that not seeing Jesus physically in this present day is somehow advantageous. It is advantageous because not seeing Jesus physically now requires us to have more faith than those who saw Him physically while He was on this earth. Therefore, those of us who believe in Him now shall be able to witness Him do mighty things in our lives than He did when He was on this earth because we have believed without seeing.

Jesus created Adam and Eve as a perfect couple, with perfect stature, a perfect mind, perfect character, perfect love, and perfect health among other perfect facets. Sin brought imperfection. As a result, children are born with imperfect conditions, thus blurring their identity. When we go to Jesus like Bartimaeus did, He shall uncover the mask of sin that is covering us and reveal to us our identity.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come before You today asking You to have mercy on me. Wash away all the stains of sin from my life and show me my true identity. Please help me to live according to the purpose that you created me for. Please make me reflect your image more clearly. Heal me of all the diseases that reside in me and the disabilities that I possess. Please help me to do the righteous acts that I have always wanted to do but I have not been able to do. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Find out the meaning of all your names, including nicknames and reflect how they portray you. It can be good if you write each name and write things in your life that you have done that are in line with each name.
2. If you are not living to the good and righteous meaning of your name, pray and ask God to help you live to its standards. Do this daily.
3. Ask God if He requires you to have a name change or if there is an additional name He wants to give you.
4. If you are ill and/or disable, pray for your illness and/or disability.

5. Create a prayer list for people who are suffering from illness and disability and daily pray for God to heal them.
6. Plan with friends to do hospital ministry or visiting disabled people and fellowship with them.
7. Evaluate your life and ask God how you can get closer to Him. Getting closer to God requires Bible study and total obedience. Are you using your gifts for His glory? Ask God to show you how you can do that.

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CHAPTER 9

DETERMINATION IS FAITH

The whole room was full, no one could access the door,

People had gathered inside, from the Savior they wanted to learn more,

The sick of the palsy coming to Jesus, he was carried by four,

They chose to pass through the roof, they were determined to the core.

Uncovering the roof, letting down the bed that the sick man lay,

Bringing him to Jesus, the truth, the life, and the way,

When Jesus saw their faith, to the sick He did say,

Son, your sins have been forgiven today.

Go to Jesus, work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Seek God's love and mercy which is unending,

When you feel weak, when your feelings are draining,

God's love will shower you with blessings, forever raining.

When you see no opening, create one,

Trust in the Lord to make a way where there is none,

Our war is spiritual, we need no bomb, we need no gun,

Let's have faith in God, the eternal One.

Mark 2:2-5 (KJV) - "[2] And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the Word unto them. [3] And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. [4] And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. [5] When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

"This paralytic had lost all hope of recovery. His disease was the result of a sinful life, and his sufferings were embittered by remorse.... His great desire was relief from the burden of sin. He longed to see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with heaven. Then he would be content to live or to die, according to God's will....

He besought his friends to carry him on his bed to Jesus, and this they gladly undertook to do. But so dense was the crowd that had assembled in and about the house where the Saviour was, that it was impossible for the sick man and his friends to reach Him....

Again and again the bearers of the paralytic tried to push their way through the crowd, but in vain. The sick man looked about him in unutterable anguish. How could he relinquish hope, when the longed-for help was so near? At his suggestion his friends bore him to the top of the house, and breaking up the roof, let him down at the feet of Jesus.

"The discourse was interrupted. The Saviour looked upon the mournful countenance, and saw the pleading eyes fixed upon Him. Well He knew the longing of that burdened soul. It was Christ who brought conviction to his conscience when he was yet at home.... It was Christ who had drawn the sufferer to Himself. Now, in words that fell like music on the listener's ear, the Saviour said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."" - Radiant Religion, Page 123, Ellen G. White.

In Mark 2:2, the Bible says that there was no room to receive any more visitors in the house as the house was full. The people bringing the man who was sick of the palsy could not pass through the door. Therefore, they uncovered the roof. What is fascinating is that they did not give up when they did not see an opening. Instead, they uncovered the roof. This means that when they did not see an opening, they created an opening for themselves.

We should take note that whatever material a house is built on, it is not easy to uncover a roof. Uncovering a roof requires some effort. Imagine people carrying someone on a bed all the way to a roof and still going the extra mile to uncover that roof.

These people did not consider the heavy task that they had to do. Instead, they considered the reward that they were going to receive. They kept their eyes on the prize. Many people give up when they see that the assignment lying ahead is complex or burdensome. Therefore, they forfeit the prize that they were going to get.

Hebrews 11:24-26 (KJV) - "[24] By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

In Hebrews 11:26 we are told that Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward. Moses esteemed the reward more than the temporary suffering he was going to go through. He knew that the reward was worth far more than the pain he would go through.

Success in any area in life needs such understanding. Determined school students especially those from underprivileged backgrounds usually go through a lot of suffering to study. Some put their legs in a bucket of water at night so that they do not sleep when they are studying.

I once saw an ancient photo of an Indian student studying late at night at the University of Madras in Tamil Nadu in 1905. The photo shows the student tying his hair to the wall to prevent himself from falling asleep while studying late at night. It is said that what the student was doing was quite common among Indian students in those days.

The following people are some of the people in this world who showed determination against all odds:

Malala Yousafzai was a Pakistani girl who advocated for girls' education in her region where the Taliban had banned it. She faced numerous death threats. In 2012, she was shot in the head by a Taliban shooter. Despite the life-threatening injury that Malala got, she continued her advocacy from her hospital bed and later from the United Kingdom, where she recovered. She became the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate and continues campaigning for education worldwide.

Nelson Mandela was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary. Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years for his efforts to end apartheid and bring equality to South Africa. Even in prison, Mandela continued to inspire the anti-apartheid movement. After his release, he led negotiations to dismantle apartheid and became South Africa's first Black president in 1994, promoting reconciliation and peace.

Stephen Hawking was a theoretical physicist known for his work on black holes and relativity. He was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) at the age of 21, which progressively paralyzed him. Despite his physical limitations, Hawking continued to work, communicate through a speech-generating device, and published influential scientific papers and books. He became one of the most renowned scientists of his time.

Bethany Hamilton was a professional surfer who lost her left arm in a shark attack at the age of 13. Losing an arm posed significant challenges to her surfing career and daily life. Within a month of the attack, Hamilton returned to surfing and adapted her technique to compete with one arm. She went on to become a professional surfer, winning national competitions and inspiring millions with her story.

Rosa Parks was an African American civil rights activist. In 1955, Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white person on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, during a time of intense racial segregation and discrimination.

Rosa's act of defiance became a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, which followed her arrest, led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional. Parks continued to work for civil rights and social justice throughout her life.

Thomas Edison was an American inventor and businessperson. Edison faced many failures and setbacks in his attempts to invent the electric light bulb. He conducted thousands of experiments, facing repeated failure, but he persevered. His determination paid off when he successfully invented a practical and long-lasting electric light bulb, revolutionizing modern life.

Nick Vujicic is an Australian motivational speaker born with tetra-amelia syndrome; a rare disorder characterized by the absence of all four limbs. Vujicic faced significant physical and emotional challenges growing up without limbs. Despite his condition, he learned to live

independently and pursued a career in motivational speaking, spreading messages of hope and inspiration. He founded the nonprofit organization Life Without Limbs and has spoken to millions around the world.

Frida Kahlo was a Mexican painter known for her self-portraits and works inspired by nature and Mexican artifacts. Kahlo suffered from polio as a child and was severely injured in a bus accident at the age of 18, which caused lifelong pain and medical problems.

Despite her physical suffering, Kahlo turned to painting, creating some of the most iconic and personal works of art. Her unique style and exploration of identity, postcolonialism, gender, and class have made her an enduring figure in art history.

Elon Musk is a business magnate, industrial designer, and engineer. Musk faced multiple business failures and financial crises, including the near collapse of his companies SpaceX and Tesla. He persisted through financial struggles and technical setbacks. Today, SpaceX has revolutionized space travel, and Tesla has led the way in electric vehicles and sustainable energy solutions.

Wilma Rudolph was an American sprinter who became a world-record-holding Olympic champion and international sports icon. Rudolph was born prematurely and contracted polio as a child, which left her with a paralyzed leg. Through years of physical therapy and determination, she overcame her disability. She went on to win three gold medals at the 1960 Rome Olympics, becoming the first American woman to achieve such a feat in a single Olympiad.

Have you given up?

Some people give up because there is no job opening in the organizations surrounding them (in their town, city, or country). Like the men who passed through the roof, if there is no opening, we should create our own opening.

Some people give up because the medicine that they have been given by the doctors has failed to heal them. Some give up because all the advice they have been given by counsellors or relationship coaches has failed to make their relationships work.

Some give up because they have failed in all the business ideas that they have tried to implement. They give up because the business advise they have gotten from all business books (excluding the Bible) and the best business mentors has failed to bring their efforts to fruition.

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for. Faith is not giving up on whatever good thing that one is hoping for until they grasp it. Luke 15:4 (KJV) - "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" The shepherd who has lost one of his sheep does not give up looking for it until he finds it.

In Mark 2:5, when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the sick man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus said this after He saw the faith of those people in their determination to bring the sick man to Him against all odds.

Exodus 20:8 (AMP) - “Remember the Sabbath (seventh) day to keep it holy (set apart, dedicated to God).”

Sometimes determination in faith is lost because we easily forget God. When the Sabbath is on our minds all the time, so will God be. Remembering the Sabbath does not call us to focus on the day. Instead, it calls us to focus on God. When we put our focus on God the entire week, we shall be highly productive, and we shall be ultra-determined to practice righteousness.

Ask yourself, have you reached a point where Jesus Himself has seen your faith and has proved it?

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the lessons that I have learnt about determination. Help me to be more determined than I currently am in this faith journey. Please have mercy on me. Turn around my condition and make me to be best suited to serve and glorify you. Please help me not to give

up on this faith journey and to endeavor to live a righteous life daily. Help those around me as well. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down the people around you whom you feel sorry about their situation, and you would love to help.
2. Ask God how best you can help them.
3. Create a program of how you are going to help them and commit to it.
4. Set days for personal retreats to focus on prayer, reading, and listening to God's voice away from daily distractions.
5. Join a small group or fellowship group to build relationships with other believers and grow together in faith.
6. Keep a spiritual journal to record prayers, reflections, and insights from your Bible study and prayer times.
7. Listen to and sing worship songs to uplift your spirit and focus your heart on God.
8. Set a time each day to meditate on specific Bible verses, reflecting on their meaning, and how they apply to your life.

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CHAPTER 10

AS YOU DESIRE

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Faith in God gives you your heart's desire,

By faith, you shall be victorious over the great liar,

Faith in God fills your store, it makes you acquire,

Believe strongly in the Lord, Let your heart burn with ever blazing fire.

You cannot take the children's bread and give it to the dogs,

The woman's faith was unshaken, and she asked for the crumbs,

Faith in the Lord opens, redeems, and unblocks,

God's blessings when we humble ourselves before Him as lambs.

"Great is your faith," Jesus said to the Canaanite woman,

Jesus said to her, "be it unto thee even as thou wilt,"

She received more warmth from Jesus than she would from any quilt,

God accepts everybody who comes to Him, He chases away no human.

The woman asked for crumbs, nothing God gives you is too small,

The woman knew that little from God was sufficient to fulfill her goal,

With the small that we have, we should do our best in playing our role,

Wonderful things will come from that which we think is too small.

Matthew 15:28 (NKJV) – “Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”

“Behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” Matthew 15:22, R. V. The people of this district were of the old Canaanite race. They were idolaters, and were despised and hated by the Jews. To this class belonged the woman who now came to Jesus. She was a heathen, and was therefore excluded from the advantages which the Jews daily enjoyed. There were many Jews living among the Phoenicians, and the tidings of Christ's work had penetrated to this region. Some of the people had listened to His words and had witnessed His wonderful works. This woman had heard of the prophet, who, it was reported, healed all manner of diseases. As she heard of His power, hope sprang up in her heart. Inspired by a mother's love, she determined to present her daughter's case to Him. It was her resolute purpose to bring her affliction to Jesus. He must heal her child. She had sought help from the heathen gods, but had obtained no relief. And at times she was tempted to think, What can this Jewish teacher do for me? But the word had come, He heals all manner of diseases, whether those who come to Him for help are rich or poor. She determined not to lose her only hope. “- The Desire of Ages, Page 399.2, Ellen G. White.

“Christ knew this woman's situation. He knew that she was longing to see Him, and He placed Himself in her path. By ministering to her sorrow, He could give a living representation of the lesson He designed to teach. For this He had brought His disciples into this region. He desired them to see the ignorance existing in cities and villages close to the land of Israel. The people who had been given every opportunity to understand the truth were without a knowledge of the needs of those around them. No effort was made to help souls in darkness. The partition wall which Jewish pride had erected, shut even the disciples from sympathy with the heathen world. But these barriers were to be broken down.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 400.1, Ellen G. White.

A woman from Canaan approached Jesus to heal her. Canaan refers to a region and its inhabitants in the ancient Near East, which is prominently mentioned in the Bible. Canaan is the ancient name for a region that includes modern-day Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and parts of Jordan and Syria.

Canaan is often described in the Bible as extending from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The Canaanites were often in conflict with the Israelites. By Jesus' time, the term may have been used more broadly to refer to Gentiles (non-Jews) living in the area.

Before Jesus healed the woman He had tested her faith three times. The first time the Canaanite woman came to Jesus crying to Him to have mercy on her, Jesus did not respond (Matthew 15:22-23). When the disciples told Him to send her away, He answered, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24, KJV).

Afterward, she came and worshipped Jesus and asked Him to help her. Jesus answered and said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs (Matthew 15:26).” She responded and said in Matthew 15:27 (KJV) – “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters table.”

When Jesus heard that, He was extremely pleased. He was delighted of how the woman persisted in faith in making her request to Him. It was like when Jacob wrestled with the angel and refused to leave the angel until he blessed him.

“Christ did not immediately reply to the woman's request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman, and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 400.2, Ellen G. White.

“But although Jesus did not reply, the woman did not lose faith. As He passed on, as if not hearing her, she followed Him, continuing her supplications. Annoyed by her importunities, the disciples asked Jesus to send her away. They saw that their Master treated her with indifference, and they therefore supposed that the prejudice of the Jews against the Canaanites was pleasing to Him. But it was a pitying Saviour to whom the woman made her plea, and in answer to the request of the disciples, Jesus said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Although this answer appeared to be in accordance with the prejudice of the Jews, it was an implied rebuke to the disciples, which they afterward understood as reminding them of what He had often told them,

—that He came to the world to save all who would accept Him.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 400.3, Ellen G. White.

The Canaanite woman just wanted the crumbs and not necessarily the entire loaf. This is because she strongly believed that the crumbs from the master would be more than enough for her. In other words, she believed that ‘small’ things that come from God are more than enough for her or rather for everyone. Nothing given to you by God is too small. It may seem small, but it has infinite capacity because God is an infinite God.

Jesus was glad that the woman realized this and told her, “Great is your faith.” The woman’s great faith was shown when she requested a little portion of the savior’s power (crumbs). The weakest point of God’s power overpowers the strongest point of Satan’s power. With God’s power in you, nothing in the entire universe can defeat you.

“The Saviour's visit to Phoenicia and the miracle there performed had a yet wider purpose. Not alone for the afflicted woman, nor even for His disciples and those who received their labors, was the work accomplished; but also “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” John 20:31. The same agencies that barred men away from Christ eighteen hundred years ago are at work today. The spirit which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile is still active. Pride and prejudice have built strong walls of separation between different classes of men. Christ and His mission have been misrepresented, and multitudes feel that they are virtually shut away from the ministry of the gospel. But let them not feel that they are shut away from Christ. There are no barriers which man or Satan can erect but that faith can penetrate.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 403.1, Ellen G. White.

“In faith the woman of Phoenicia flung herself against the barriers that had been piled up between Jew and Gentile. Against discouragement, regardless of appearances that might have led her to doubt, she trusted the Saviour's love. It is thus that Christ desires us to trust in Him. The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 403.2, Ellen G. White.

Psalm 37:4 (KJV) – “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

It is an act of faith to delight yourself in God. The woman was not quick to leave Jesus despite the harsh sounding words from Christ because she delighted in Him. When you find Godly activities to be burdensome, you will easily lose interest in them. Some of us treat Godly activities like how many employees treat the jobs that they hate. Such employees hate their jobs, but they must do them because they want to make money from them.

Sometimes we worship God and do acts of service to Him because we want to get blessings from Him. However, we do not delight in that. Few Christians look forward to praying the same way they look forward to watching a movie or going for a date.

We often feel lazy to pray when we wake up and before we sleep but since we have set it as a routine, we force ourselves to do it. Most times, we do not pray because we want to, we pray because we have to. That is why some of us when we get tested by small trials, we are quick to leave the church and to leave God.

One whose passion is playing video games, will keep on playing them no matter the challenges he encounters in the game. In fact, the more challenges he encounters, the more passionate he is in playing that game. One who loves hiking hills and mountains will strive to reach the highest peak and sometimes go round the entire crater despite how challenging it may seem. One day we went for a hike to Mount Longonot with the youth in our church. While we were hiking, it started raining but we did not go back because of the rain. We continued hiking because we were delighted to do that activity.

While I was at Laiser Hill Academy, I would see students going to play rugby in the field or go to the swimming pool to swim while it rained heavily because they delighted in those activities. Some of us, when we look out of the window on Sabbath and see it raining, we find an excuse not to go to church.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) - “[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

When we delight ourselves in the Lord, we shall overlook the challenges and keep our focus on God. We shall be able to rejoice and sing hymns when we are persecuted. When we delight in God, we shall overcome all obstacles and conquer all that needs to be conquered. Like the Canaanite woman, when we delight in God, He shall give us our heart's desire.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Our heavenly Father and King, thank You for the lessons that You have taught me on faith from Your Word. I appreciate every little thing that you have given me. I ask you to use whatever you have given me to the best of your glory. Lord, help me to delight in You always and as You have promised, give me the desires of my heart. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Take time to reflect and meditate on Psalm 37:4. Write it down and ask God what it means.
2. Take time to reflect and meditate on Isaiah 58:13-14. Write it down and ask God what it means.
3. Write down all the things that you desire and try to find out if they are in accordance with God's will/Word. Do this prayerfully.

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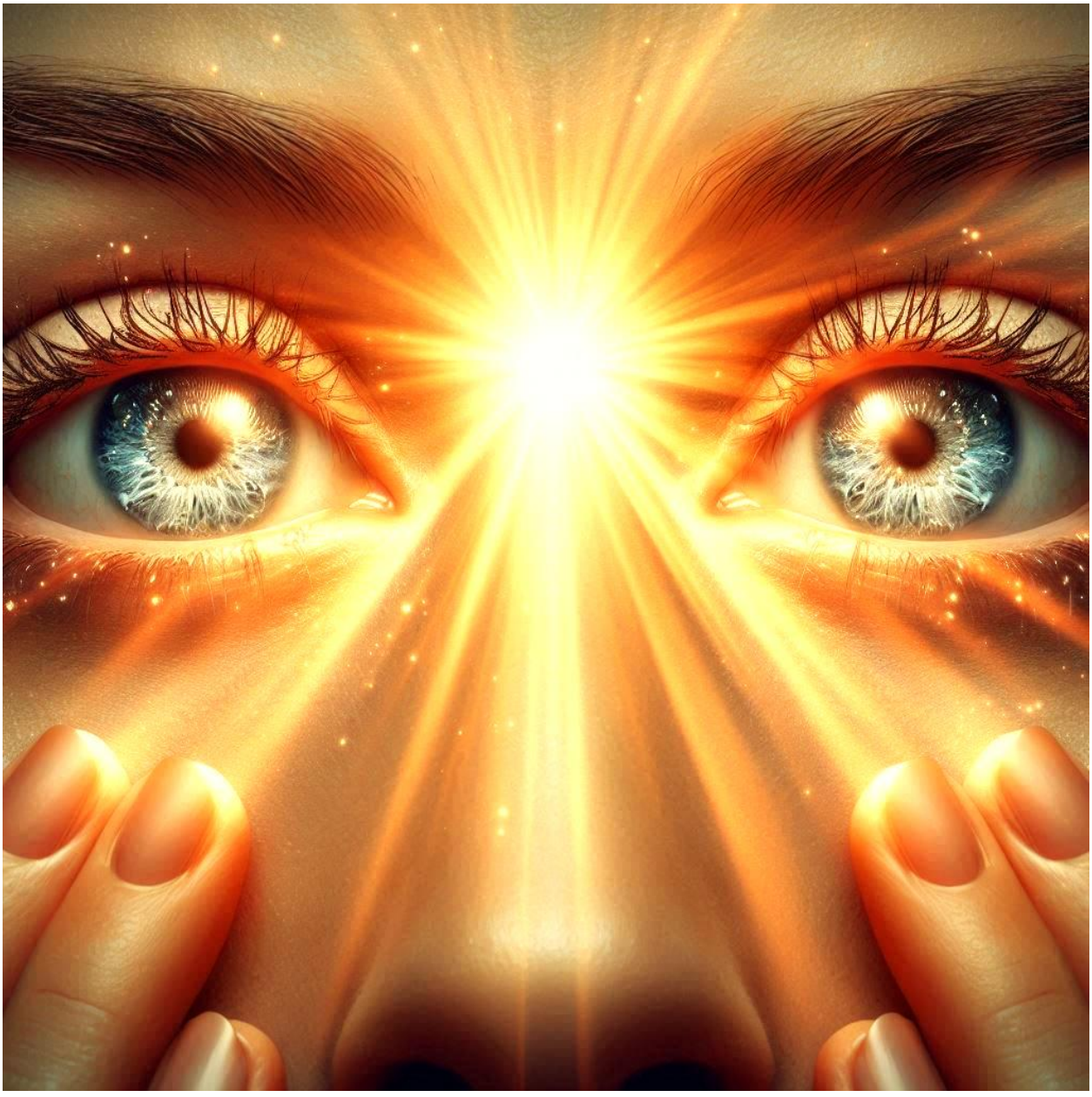
CHAPTER 11

FAITH IN GOD GIVES SIGHT



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And behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside,

When they heard Jesus passing, they submitted as His bride,

When Christ passed by, with their hearts they cried,

Have mercy on us, O Lord, and He opened His arms wide.

When the multitude rebuked them, they cried out louder,

When we face opposition, our determination should be stronger,

They wanted nothing else, but Christ to give them a shoulder,

Christ was more than willing to have them for longer than longer.

Christ asked them, what will ye that I shall do unto you?

Christ asked them that, for He heard their solemn cries,

Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes,

They followed Christ who gave them a brand-new view.

Faith makes one see, Faith gives sight,

Faith makes you be, if you love God with all your might,

Faith makes one see that it is blessed to do right,

Faith makes the bended knee rise to the highest height.

Matthew 20:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. [30] And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David."

The two blind men could not see Jesus by their physical eyes because they were blind. They had heard about Jesus and were convicted that He is the true Messiah. Therefore, they genuinely believed in Him.

Micah 7:18 – "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy."

The two blind men believed that God is a God of mercy. They did not first ask God to heal them. They did not first ask God to fulfill their physical needs like most of us do, they asked Him to fulfill their spiritual needs first. Even though their physical impairment afflicted them, they believed that their spiritual impairment was greater than their physical impairment. They believed that if they get full spiritual healing, they will get full physical healing.

One widespread problem with most of us is that we only take our physical problems to God. For example, we ask God to help us find employment or we ask Him to heal us from our diseases. The two blind men acknowledged their sinful state and sought to have their spiritual needs fulfilled before their physical needs. Therefore, they asked God for forgiveness. Most of us seek to have our physical needs fulfilled first before our spiritual needs.

Those two blind men highly esteemed fellowship. They collaborated to ask Jesus in unison to have mercy on them.

Luke 18:9-14 (KJV) - "[9] And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: [10] Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. [11] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. [12] I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. [13] And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the

other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The two blind men humbled themselves. Many people go to God acknowledging how righteous they are.

The multitude rebuked them. That action of the multitude symbolized a battle of many against one. They did not hear the discouraging words of the multitude. Instead, they persisted in crying out more. Many are being ridiculed for keeping Saturday (which is the seventh day) as the Sabbath since they are a minority compared to the huge majority that does not keep it. Such should be delighted to be peculiar people and they should not bow down to the demands of the world to be like everybody else.

Matthew 20:32 (KJV) - "And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, what will ye that I shall do unto you?" Jesus stood still to ministered to them. Faith in God can make God to stand still and minister to your needs.

Matthew 20:33 (KJV) - "They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened."

"Two blind men concurred in their request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ, Matthew 18:19. These joint-sufferers were joint-suitors; being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication. Note, it is good for those that are labouring under the same calamity, or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all the petitioners. These blind men were sitting by the wayside, as blind beggars used to do. Note, those that would receive mercy from Christ, must place themselves there where His out-goings are; where He manifests Himself to those that seek Him. It is good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in His road." - Matthew Henry's Complete Bible Commentary.

After asking Jesus to have mercy on them, the two blind men told Jesus what they needed. We should love to make our requests to God after confessing and repenting our sins. John 9:31 (KJV): "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." The model of prayer is not limited to a specific model, but it is a good practice to seek the Lord with our spiritual needs first before our physical needs.

Matthew 20:34 (KJV) - "So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him."

Jesus had mercy on the two blind men, and He healed them. He was delighted by their faith and gave them what they desired most. We would get many of the things we ask from God, if only we would ask Him.

Matthew 7:7 (KJV) - "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

“The Lord specifies no conditions except that you hunger for His mercy, desire His counsel, and long for His love. “Ask.” The asking, makes it manifest that you realize your necessity; and if you ask in faith you will receive. The Lord has pledged His Word, and it cannot fail. If you come with true contrition you need not feel that you are presumptuous in asking for what the Lord has promised. When you ask for the blessings you need, that you may perfect a character after Christ's likeness, the Lord assures you that you are asking according to a promise that will be verified. That you feel and know you are a sinner is sufficient ground for asking for His mercy and compassion. The condition upon which you may come to God is not that you shall be holy, but that you desire Him to cleanse you from all sin and purify you from all iniquity. The argument that we may plead now and ever is our great need, our utterly helpless state, that makes Him and His redeeming power a necessity.” - Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, Page 130.2, Ellen G. White.

God wants us to see clearly, physically, and most importantly spiritually. He does not want us to be blind or short-sighted. He wants us to have an impeccable mind vision which is covered in humility but lofty in ambition, thoughts, and motives as high as heaven is from earth. Our thoughts and the content in our minds are to go far beyond those of worldly people. This shall be achieved when we ask Him. This shall be achieved when we have faith for faith in God gives sight.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Our eternal Father and everlasting King, open my eyes and help me to see better physically and spiritually. Uplift my mind that my thoughts and imaginations may be as high as heaven is from the earth. Heal me and heal those around me who are sick and disabled. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Ask God to give you spiritual clarity and strength daily.
2. Meditate on Matthew 20:29-34 and Psalm 66:18.
3. Partner with a fellow believer especially one who has the same needs as you or a small group for joint prayer sessions. Pray for each other’s spiritual and physical needs, encouraging and supporting one another in faith. That is if you can find one.
4. Reflect on how your service aligns with Jesus' compassion and healing in Matthew 20:34.
5. Each week, identify a specific spiritual need or desire. Follow the principles of Matthew 7:7—ask God in prayer, seek Him through studying His Word, and knock by engaging in activities that align with your request (e.g., volunteering, attending church services). Track how God responds to your faith and efforts.
6. In your Bible study group, set a time for testimonies each time you meet for sharing your testimonies.

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CHAPTER 12

FAITH LIKE THIS

When Jesus entered Capernaum, He was approached by a centurion,

The Roman soldier believed in the Son of God, the Son of Zion,

Whose Word stands firm and does not change like a chameleon,

He believed that Christ's power transcends his weapons of iron.

Lord, my servant lieth at home sick and grievously tormented,

On Emmanuel's ears, the centurion with anguish lamented,

His sickly servant in God's loving arms he presented,

Among all physicians, Jesus is the most augmented.

Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof,

He told Jesus to speak His Word only, the Word that's living proof,

The Bible has power for God's Word is truth,

Blessed is he who believeth it, and everything it sayeth, he doeth.

Verily I say to you, In Israel, I have not seen faith like this,

Jesus astonished by the Roman, He had never seen faith like His,

His own people rejected Him, some betrayed Him with a kiss,

God's Word knows no distance and bounds, it can make flames freeze.

Matthew 8:5-10 (KJV) - “5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, 6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

In the above text we see that Jesus healed the centurion servant. The centurion felt that his house was unworthy for the Lord Jesus to step into it. He believed that it is possible for Jesus to speak a word from where He was, and his servant would be healed. Many are waiting to hear God’s physical voice so that they can do what God has told them to do. They neglect Bible study, not knowing that the power in the Bible is the same as the power in God’s physical voice.

The centurion told Jesus that he is a man of authority and whatever he commands his servants to do, they do it quickly. If that is the case and he is a mortal human being, how much more can Jesus do? He believed in as much as he was powerful, God is more powerful than him. In his faith, humility is shown. Many successful men and woman who are in top leadership positions often foolishly believe that no one is above them. They may not say it in words, but you can witness that belief in their actions.

When the centurion servant acknowledged that God is more authoritative than him and more powerful than him and that the Lord can do more than him, he pleased God. This scenario aligns with the verse in Matthew 7:11 (KJV) that says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

It also aligns with the story of the unjust judge who had no respect for God or man.

Luke 18:1-8 (AMP) - “1 Now Jesus was telling the disciples a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart, 2 saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and had no respect for man. 3 There was a [desperate] widow in that city and she kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice and legal protection from my

adversary.’ [4] For a time he would not; but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, [5] yet because this widow continues to bother me, I will give her justice and legal protection; otherwise by continually coming she [will be an intolerable annoyance and she] will wear me out.’” [6] Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says! [7] And will not [our just] God defend and avenge His elect [His chosen ones] who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay [in providing justice] on their behalf? [8] I tell you that He will defend and avenge them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find [this kind of persistent] faith on the earth?”

If an unjust judge can hear the cry of that persistent woman, how much more shall a perfect and righteous God do?

A centurion is a commander of a Roman army. In other words, he is a Roman soldier. Jesus said in Matthew 8:10 that He has never seen such faith in Israel. The Romans did not believe in God, and they barely possessed God’s Word. On the other hand, the Israelites believed in God and had the privilege of having messengers of God (for example prophets) ministering to them. However, none of them showed the level of faith that the centurion did.

Luke 4:16 (KJV) - "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read."

Jesus’ custom was to go to the Synagogue on the Sabbath day. The Bible says in Matthew 12:8 that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath day is a day of rest. Therefore, if Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and the Sabbath is a day of rest, we should conclude that Jesus is the Lord who wants to give people rest. He went to the synagogue every Sabbath to give the people rest.

It was His custom to go to the Synagogue every Sabbath. It was, and it is still His custom to give His people rest. God wants you to rest. You cannot enjoy that rest when you are suffering. This means that He wants to take away the suffering from you. Jesus delights to give people rest. Jesus delights in giving people blessings. Jesus delights in curing the sick. Jesus delights in taking away all burdens of affliction. Matthew 11:28 (KJ21) - “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. When the centurion approached him, despite being a Roman, Jesus gave him rest.

One good thing about ministering to other people that are not of our faith is that we witness Godly attributes that are not common in our faith. For example, some unbelievers are more generous than Christians. Some of them are less greedy than Christians. Others have more love than Christians. Like the centurion, some have more faith in God than Christians.

“The Jews had been instructed from childhood concerning the work of the Messiah. The inspired utterances of patriarchs and prophets and the symbolic teaching of the sacrificial service had been theirs. But they had disregarded the light; and now they saw in Jesus nothing to be desired. But the centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings, and still further shut out by the bigotry of the Jews, and by the contempt of his own countrymen for the people of Israel,—this man perceived the truth to which the children of Abraham were blinded. He did not wait to see whether the Jews themselves would receive the One who claimed to be their Messiah. As the “light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9) had shone upon him, he had, though afar off, discerned the glory of the Son of God.” - The Desire of Ages, Page 317.3, Ellen G. White.

The centurion believed that Jesus did not have to be where he was for Him to heal his servant. You do not have to travel long distances for you to get God’s blessings. You can get God’s blessings where you are. You might like a certain genuine online preacher, and you want to meet him, but you do not have the funds to go where he is. Before you look for those funds to go and meet him, ask yourself if you have applied the entire truth that he has preached online.

Some Christians go round looking for prophets to heal them from their various diseases. Some get conned by some false prophets while some invite demonic spirits into their lives through ‘miracles’ done to them by these false prophets. Jesus can heal you right where you are without the need of you having to travel anywhere.

Psalm 138:2 (KJ21) - “I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth, for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name.” God has placed His Word above all His name. Therefore, God’s Word has more power than we can ever imagine.

““If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Mark 9:23. It is faith that connects us with heaven and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every evil trait and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is still the same mighty Redeemer. Then grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. You can never perish while you do this—never.” - The Ministry of Healing, Page 65.4, Ellen G. White.

The centurion believed in God’s Word more than anything else. He requested Jesus to speak a word from where He was. He believed that the power of God’s Word is not limited or dependent on the physical location because God’s Word created physical locations. He believed that God’s Word knows no boundaries and restrictions. God’s Word needs no transmitting signal, it is its own transmitting signal. God’s Word goes where no human being can go. It does what nobody else can do, only God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come to You in the name of Jesus. Please help me to understand the magnanimity and power of Your Holy Word. Lord, help me to believe in it with all my heart and with all my might. Through it, do miracles in my life like You did with the centurion servant. Please help me to genuinely care for others. Please grant me the humility to change where Your Word tells me to change. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down some of the things that you have witnessed Christ’s power doing in your life.

2. What problem are you facing that you need it to be taken away? Pray about it and seek counsel from the Bible on how to solve it.
3. Read Psalm 138:2, find out the names of God and meditate on how God has exalted His Word above His name.
4. Reflect on your faith journey and ask yourself if people can look at your life and say, “I have never seen a faith like this.”
5. Read the story of the centurion and how he cared for his servant. Ask yourself if you genuinely care for those around you like the centurion did. If you say you do, what do you do in actions to show that you care? If you do not do anything, what can you do to show them that you care?

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CHAPTER 13

FAITH IN GOD IS PRAYING BIG PRAYERS

How big are your prayers?

Tell them all to Jesus who cares.

Do not be afraid to share,

Faith in God is praying big prayers.

Your burden, God promises to carry,

Trust Him and have no worry,

Have no anxiety, have no hurry,

God is not slow; He does not tarry.

They brought Jesus a man sick on a bed,

He was made pure, though his sins were crimson red,

For they brought him to the One who made,

Heaven and earth, for us, His blood He shed.

Nothing so big for God,

Therefore, trust in the Lord,

He is strong enough to carry your Load,

So, pray Big and have trust in the Lord your God.

Matthew 9:2 (KJV) – “And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

What disease was palsy? The term "palsy" in historical and biblical contexts referred to various forms of paralysis or conditions involving loss of motor function. In the story of the centurion's servant, the word "palsy" is used in the King James Version of the Bible to describe the servant's condition. While modern medical terminology has more specific classifications, "palsy" in this context likely referred to a condition that involved severe muscle weakness, paralysis, and possibly tremors or convulsions.

Jesus saw their faith because they brought to Him a person with a chronic illness. Being God from the beginning, He was used to people praying small and faithless prayers. He was used to people coming to Him with small requests. He was used to people coming to Him with small illnesses and very few people believed that He could cure the worst diseases.

Many people limit God. They ask God for things which seem reasonable to them and right within their reach. However, when it comes to things that are beyond their reach, they avoid asking God. Therefore, they resolve to going to other mediums like witch doctors.

1 Kings 8:27 (KJ21) - "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built!"

God is not a small God. God is a big God. Therefore, we need to address Him in a big way. We ought to pray big prayers. There is no problem in approaching God with small requests because God intends that we should tell Him of every little thing that is bothering and worrying us. However, God does not want us to hide our mega desires, wishes, dreams, fantasies, and imaginations from Him.

Luke 1:37 (KJ21) - "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

We need to normalize asking God for the impossible not just the possible.

Psalm 90:2 (KJ21): "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

God reigns from everlasting to everlasting. He is infinite. He can never run short of supply of whatever we ask from Him.

Exodus 31:13 (KJ21) - "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord who doth sanctify you."

Exodus 31:13 tells us that it is God who sanctifies us. What big sin or evil addiction are you struggling with? Ask God to help you stop it. For example, you may be struggling with pornography but the major sin encompassing it is lust. Ask God to help you overcome the spirit of lust instead of asking Him to help you overcome the sin of watching pornography alone. Do you desire your business to have a global presence? Ask God to make it possible. Do you want to have genius level ability in your weakest subject in school? Ask God to make it possible. Do you want to produce new inventions in a certain field? Ask God to give you ideas for new inventions.

"How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best." - The Desire of Ages, Page 336.3, Ellen G. White.

Faith in God is normalizing big prayers and trusting that God is faithful to answer them.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayers

O Lord, I exalt you and glorify your magnificent name. Please help me to see possibilities in everything that seems impossible. Lord, make the things that seem difficult for me easy to do. Help me to keep my ambitions high and to trust in You and believe with you it is possible to achieve

them. Help all those who are discouraged and make them believe that You can do all things. In Jesus name. Amen.

Activity

1. What massive ambition do you have in your heart, and you are feeling it is impossible to achieve? Find out through Bible study if it is God's will. If it is, write it down and pray for it till you get it.
2. Write down the sins that you are struggling with and ask God to take them away completely.
3. Write down the impossible tasks in your line of school or work and ask God to make it possible for you to do them.
4. Reflect and mediate on Philippians 4:13. Make that affirmation daily when you wake up and before you go to sleep.
5. Find someone (if you can) who is discouraged and pray for their needs while encouraging them.

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CHAPTER 14

FAITH GIVES YOU UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

What rewards from God are you expecting?

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Ensure that His ways you are not rejecting,

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

How long have you been waiting for a breakthrough?

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Open your heart and allow Jesus to get through,

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

How old was Josiah when he was made king?

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

God brought Jesus through Mary, the virgin,

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Love your neighbor as you love yourself,

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Love God more than yourself,

Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

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Introduction

Have you ever tried to surprise someone? How did that person feel? Has someone ever tried to surprise you? How did you feel? There is a friend who is constantly knocking on the doors of our hearts because He wants to surprise us always. That friend is God. God, who created the words surprise, endless, and blessings, wants to surprise us with endless blessings. He is a forever interesting God, possessing infinite methods to make us happy.

Hebrews 11:5 (KJV) – "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

The question is, how did Enoch live?

Genesis 5:22 (KJV) – "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters."

Enoch lived a life of faith. He walked with God all his life. Enoch had no idea of how God was going to bless him. He knew the sin that entered the world through Adam and Eve caused all human beings to be mortal because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). He probably knew that one day he would face his death. God blessed him with life that was long enough here on earth hence living for 365 years in this world. Everyone before him in his lineage died; therefore, he was expecting to die just like them. However, he did not die like everyone else. God translated him directly to heaven without seeing death. This blessing was an unexpected reward. It was a blessing that was not experienced by anyone else before him.

When you please God through faithful living, He will give you blessings He has never given anyone else. He will always surprise you with unexpected blessings that you don't deserve. He will give you rewards that no one can give you. Nobody could take Enoch directly to heaven and make him immortal. Only God could do that. God wants to give you such kind of blessings because He wants to make it clear that He is the one who is working in your life.

Therefore, do not compromise the commandments of God to please men. Everyone in this world has a limit to what they can give you because they possess limited resources. God possesses infinite things because He can create. Do not go to work on Sabbath to please your boss.

In his book, Produced by Faith, Hollywood Producer Devon Franklin talks of how he never compromised on the Sabbath during his career. He said one day, they were short of one cameraman, and he was told to take the place of the cameraman. However, the shoot was supposed to happen one Friday after sundown when the Sabbath was starting. He did not want to annoy his superiors because he wanted to advance his career.

However, he chose not to compromise with the commandments of God and decided to be firm in his faith. He told them he could not shoot the film that day because it would be on the Sabbath. The production crew had no problem with that and allowed him to worship. One of the crew members, who was not a church member, asked him if he could go to church with him on Saturday. Devon agreed, and they went to church together. Devon's workmate asking him to go to church together was an unexpected blessing.

God is not boring as many of us think Him to be. He is remarkably interesting. We can see the evidence in the wide variety of plants and animals. We can also see that through the broad range of styles used to write the Bible and the various occupations of people that God has used to write it. He is a God who has created billions of human beings and made each one unique. He is a God who never repeats miracles.

Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without seeing death, but God used different means to take them. He is full of surprises, always wanting to surprise you. Unfortunately, He does not do that because many people live by sight instead of faith. People rarely act by faith, and unknowingly, they have placed other gods before the almighty God. We pray, but our prayers are not filled with faith.

We often ask God for something but use sinful means to get that thing. For example, we can ask God for a government tender, and instead of complying with His Word when applying for that tender, we bribe or give kickbacks to get it. Psalm 106:3 (KJV) – “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” God wants us to act by faith; we can only do that by living by every word that proceeds from His mouth.

It grieves God when He can’t bless us as He wants when we fail to exercise faith. Lack of faith blocks blessings. Faith in action unlocks blessings.

Let’s look at some Biblical examples who received unexpected blessings as a result of faith:

Abraham

Genesis 13:8-17 (KJV) – “[8] And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. [9] Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. [10] And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. [11] Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. [12] Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. [13] But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. [14] And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”

“Abraham returned to Canaan “very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” Lot was still with him, and again they came to Bethel, and pitched their tents by the altar which they had before erected. They soon found that increased possessions brought increased trouble. In the midst of hardships and trials they had dwelt together in harmony, but in their prosperity there was danger of strife between them. The pasturage was not sufficient for the flocks and herds of both, and the frequent disputes among the herdsmen were brought for settlement to their masters. It was evident that they must separate. Abraham was Lot's senior in years, and his superior in relation, in wealth, and in position; yet he was the first to propose plans for preserving peace. Although the whole land had been given him by God Himself, he courteously waived this right.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.1, Ellen G. White.

Abraham allowed Lot to choose first. Philippians 2:3 (KJV) – "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Few people

follow this Godly principle. It is the carnal mind's nature to put oneself above everyone else. This behavior is common in kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, universities, at our workplaces and in our daily lives.

In schools, students want to appear to their teachers that they are better than their fellow students. Bullying, insults and fights take place because some students have put their interests above the other students' interest. Many of us only give to charity when we have excess. Few can sacrifice what they have for the benefit of another person.

If there is a vacant position in an office, and two people are eligible, many will go to extremes to ensure the other person doesn't get that position. They will use various evil strategies to eliminate the other person from the competition, from false allegations to murder. We see this happening frequently with politicians. Unfortunately, the world is in its state because many people behave like Lot, and very few behave like Abraham.

What Abraham did was an act of faith. He was older than Lot and superior to him in wealth and position. It was an act of tremendous faith by allowing Lot to choose first. God always rewards faith. He rewarded Abraham by giving him the entire land, including what was Lot's. He told Abraham to walk in the land's length and breadth and look north, south, east, and west (everywhere). Secondly, He promised to multiply Abraham's seed as the dust of the earth or the stars in the sky. God can reward you with so much beyond comprehension for doing a small act of righteousness. Make it a constant habit to do right in God's sight.

Abraham did not expect to inherit the entire land, and since his wife Sarah was barren, he did not expect to have a child with her. His faith pleased God, and He, who has infinite resources, caused him to inherit the earth and made him a father of many nations. Faith gives one unexpected blessing. Always live by faith.

Lot

Genesis 19:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; [2] And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house,

and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. [3] And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."

"In the twilight two strangers drew near to the city gate. They were apparently travelers coming in to tarry for the night. None could discern in those humble wayfarers the mighty heralds of divine judgment, and little dreamed the gay, careless multitude that in their treatment of these heavenly messengers that very night they would reach the climax of the guilt which doomed their proud city. But there was one man who manifested kindly attention toward the strangers and invited them to his home. Lot did not know their true character, but politeness and hospitality were habitual with him; they were a part of his religion—lessons that he had learned from the example of Abraham. Had he not cultivated a spirit of courtesy, he might have been left to perish with the rest of Sodom. Many a household, in closing its doors against a stranger, has shut out God's messenger, who would have brought blessing and hope and peace." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 158.1, Ellen G. White.

An exceedingly small act of faith, such as welcoming strangers to one's house, saved Lot from the destruction of Sodom, the city he lived in. Lot might not be as righteous as Abraham because he gave himself first priority when Abraham told him to choose the land he would go to. Later, while the two angels told them to escape from the city, Lot lingered, but they held his hand. He might have been reluctant to leave the city of Sodom because of its beauty and the plenty of riches it offers.

The same applies to us. We are reluctant to leave this world's sinful pleasures and share in Christ's glory. Many Christians do not want to hear of Christ's second coming because they feel they have not fully enjoyed their lives on earth. Lot might have been struggling with the desires of the flesh, but he portrayed faith when he welcomed the two guests to his house, not knowing they were angels.

Hebrews 13:2 (KJV) – "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Lot entertained angels unaware. Some people invite visitors to their houses half-heartedly. They invite them by word of mouth, but deep in their hearts they wish that the person could reject the offer. Lot was different from most of us.

After the two angels rejected Lot's offer, he insisted. This act showed his earnestness in inviting them. The hospitality he showed the visitors came from his heart. He cared for the visitor's comfort more than his comfort. Later on, he offered his daughters in exchange to the men of Sodom who wanted to harm the guests. However, the men of Sodom refused and insisted on the guests. Lot did not know that the city of Sodom would be destroyed. His act of kindness was an act of faith, and as a result, he was saved from the destruction that would happen. Like Lot, we shall receive unexpected blessings through our small, faithful acts.

“Every act of life, however small, has its bearing for good or for evil. Faithfulness or neglect in what are apparently the smallest duties may open the door for life's richest blessings or its greatest calamities. It is trivial things that test the character. It is the unpretending acts of daily self-denial, performed with a cheerful, willing heart that God smiles upon. We are not to live for self, but for others. And it is only by self-forgetfulness, by cherishing a loving, helpful spirit, that we can make our life a blessing. The little attentions, the small, simple courtesies, go far to make up the sum of life's happiness, and the neglect of these constitutes no small share of human wretchedness.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 158.2, Ellen G. White.

Job

Job 42:10 (KJV) – “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

“**Pray for Those Who Hurt Us**—Let us strive to walk in the light as Christ is in the light. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed, not only for himself, but for those who were opposing him. When he felt earnestly desirous that the souls that had trespassed against him might be helped, he himself received help. Let us pray, not only for ourselves, but for those who have hurt us, and are continuing to hurt us. Pray, pray, especially in your mind. Give not the Lord rest; for His ears are open to hear sincere, importunate prayers, when the soul is humbled before Him”- Letter 88, 1906, Ellen G. White.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV) – "Pray without ceasing." We should pray as often as possible and for as many people as possible. Create a prayer list and keep on adding names to that list daily. When you meet or see an afflicted person on the street, silently pray for that person. God turned the

captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Job was earnestly seeking the well-being of his friends even though he was in a worse state than them.

There is a common ideology that states that for you to help someone else, you should first help yourself. This philosophy has caused many people to take comfort in selfishness and fail to move by faith. Many have decent jobs but cannot contribute to the church or charity or help their parents and siblings because they focus on building themselves first. They deceive themselves that when they have sufficient resources is when they will start helping others.

Unfortunately, they never get to the point of having sufficient resources because money is never enough. The Bible says if you are faithful in little, you will be faithful in much (Luke 16:10). If we fail to help people with the little we have, how sure are we that we shall assist them when we have plenty? Job suffered more severe problems than his friends, but he still prayed for his friends.

Those who want to help themselves first before they help others think in their minds that they can help themselves. We are fully dependent on God; no one has the power to help himself/herself. If Job worked hard to solve his problems and neglected to pray for his friends until he was done solving his problems, he would have died without being able to solve a single problem.

Luke 1:5-13 (KJV) – "[5] There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. [6] And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. [7] And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. [8] And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, [9] According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. [10] And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. [11] And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. [12] And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. [13] But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were both righteous people, walking in the ways of God. Zacharias diligently served God as a priest in his entire life. He conducted his priestly duties with faithfulness despite his wife being barren. He did not wait for God to give him everything he

needed so that he could start serving others. He exercised faith by devoting his time and strength to God before God answered his prayers by giving him a child.

Some people are waiting for God to solve their problems first so that they can start praying for others. Unfortunately, they continue having the problems they are having. God might have stored a blessing box for them waiting to be unlocked by praying for others. We are created to be a blessing to other people. Job understood this and portrayed faith despite his affliction. He had his friends' interests at heart to the point that he might have forgotten his affliction. God gave him an unexpected blessing by turning away his captivity and giving him twice what he had before.

The Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17:17-23 (KJV) – "[17] And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. [18] And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? [19] And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. [20] And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? [21] And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. [22] And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. [23] And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth."

The widow of Zarephath had welcomed Elijah to her home and given him her only remaining meal. As God had promised her, she would never run short of supply. God never lies. He did as He had promised. Her son fell sick and died. God healed her son through His servant Elijah, bringing him to life again. That was a tremendous, unexpected blessing that she would not have gotten if she had not invited the servant of God, Elijah, to her house.

Many problems today will be solved if we diligently heed God's voice and obey everything He says. Sometimes we may fail to go to church because of an illness we are having. God might have

ordained the church service of that particular day to give you healing. Other times we fail to keep the Sabbath day holy because we have been summoned for a crucial meeting at work and don't want to lose our jobs. Therefore, we disobey God's Sabbath. We shall never know which blessings God had in store for us on that particular day because lack of faith has blocked us from accessing those blessings.

Solomon

1 Kings 3:3-4 (KJV) – "[3] And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. [4] And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar."

Solomon offered one thousand burnt offerings. It takes a long time to burn one thousand offerings, meaning he sacrificed a huge amount of flock and time to God. God was extremely pleased with him that he did something unexpected for him.

What did God do?

1 Kings 3:5 (KJV) – "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee."

God appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted. We can try to use our imagination and imagine that scenario. It is a beautiful and extraordinary privilege when your country's president or king comes to you to ask you what you want. It is a rare incidence for them to come to you. Usually, you are the one who might be trying to find ways to go to them to tell them what you want. The God of the universe, the king of kings, is coming to you to ask you what you want. An earthly king may give you a lot of material possessions or power over the jurisdiction under him. An earthly king cannot give you life. He cannot cure chronic illnesses that are incurable by men.

God can give you what no man on earth can give you. God coming to Solomon in a dream to ask him what he wanted was a tremendous honor. It was unexpected. Solomon gave one thousand burnt offerings and did not expect anything in return. God surprised him by coming to him. Later

we know that Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he may be able to lead the people. God was pleased by this act of faith because He saw that Solomon esteemed other people's interests higher than his own. Therefore, he gave him more unexpected blessings. He gave him great wealth and long life (if he obeyed God) in addition to that wisdom.

I once introduced a friend to someone looking for a person to give a social media marketing contract. My friend had just started his career in digital marketing. I praised his abilities to the prospective client until she gave him that contract. After my friend got that contract, I was happy for his success. That client to whom I had introduced my friend to ended up giving me web development and mobile app development gigs while I had no experience in the said skills. Even though I did the assignments she gave me, I learned them on the job. I ended up getting ten times more than what my friend got because she introduces me to clients to this date. Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Mary

Luke 1:27-35 (KJV) – "[27] To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. [29] And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. [30] And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. [31] And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. [32] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: [33] And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. [34] Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? [35] And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Mary was preserving her virginity to keep herself pure, not knowing that a blessing awaited her if she succeeded in preserving her virginity till marriage. An angel came to her unexpectedly and told her that she would give birth to Jesus, who is God. Preserving her virginity, which might have

seemed minor, made her give birth to God (Jesus). Jesus, who reigns from everlasting to everlasting, came to this earth to seek and save the lost. He had to come in human flesh, advancing in various stages of life as human beings do. Mary got the privilege of giving birth to Jesus. Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

Ephesians 3:20 (AMPC) – “Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over *and* above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]."

God will bless you beyond your imagination if you live by faith. Faith gives you unexpected blessings.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Gracious Creator,

In the refuge of faith, we discover resilience and empowerment. With humility, we implore Your favor, trusting that faith unveils unanticipated blessings. Steer us on the path to inheriting eternal life. May our steadfast confidence in You illuminate the way to the riches of Your plentiful and unforeseen blessings. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Think of all the times that you have received unexpected blessings. Write them down and then thank God for them.
2. Ask God to help you to live by faith at all times.

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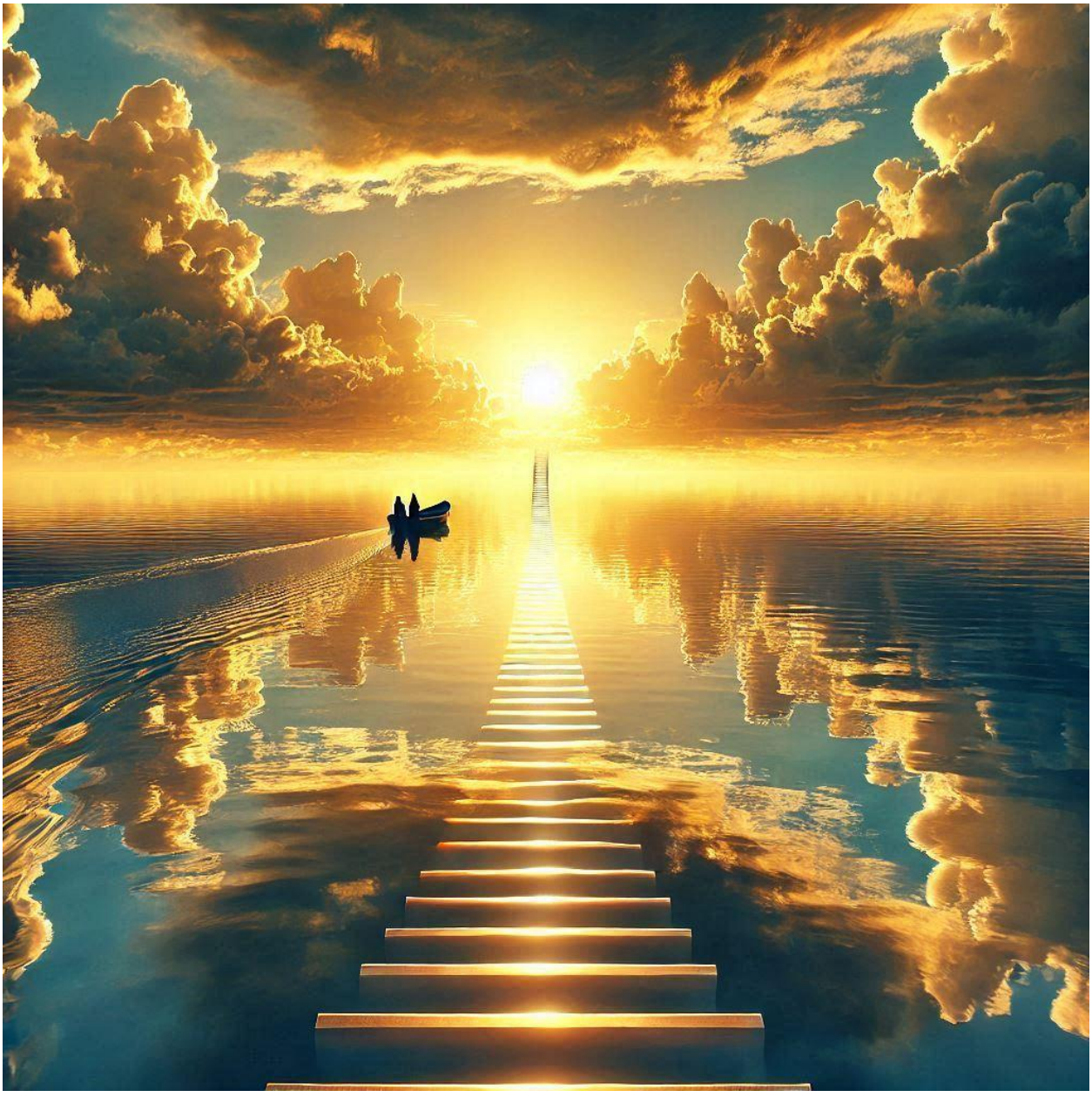
CHAPTER 15

FAITH IN GOD LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE



Faith in God leads to eternal life,

For God so loved the world that if we believe,

We shall have access to the Tree of Life,

We shall not perish; eternal blessings we shall receive.

Faith in the living God is the most blessed choice to make,

Shun sin, shun fear, and always move by faith,

God's blessings are for us to grab and take,

We can only access them if we move by faith.

I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength,

I can be holy and perfect through Christ, who gives me breath,

I can access heaven if I actively and consistently live by faith,

I shall be the first and not the last through God, who makes me great.

Profess faith, every word you use, talk it,

Act by faith everywhere you go; walk it,

Believe you can, and you are halfway there,

Believe you can't, and you'll never get there.

Hebrews 11:5 (KJV) – “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Enoch

Enoch’s faith led Enoch to inherit eternal life. He pleased God to the point that God did not allow him to face death. God gave him long life while on this earth in that he lived up to three hundred and sixty-five years. After living for that long, God translated him directly to heaven.

Genesis 5:24 (KJV) – “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

“Of Enoch it is written that he lived sixty-five years, and begat a son. After that he walked with God three hundred years. During these earlier years Enoch had loved and feared God and had kept His commandments. He was one of the holy line, the preservers of the true faith, the progenitors of the promised seed. From the lips of Adam he had learned the dark story of the Fall, and the cheering one of God's grace as seen in the promise; and he relied upon the Redeemer to come. But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first-born son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father. The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 84.3, Ellen G. White.

Enoch walked with God. The Hebrew word used for walk is the same word used for follow. Therefore, it makes sense to conclude that Enoch followed God. Our sinful nature blocks us from seeing God and having face-to-face communication with God. Since Adam and Eve, our first parents, sinned, everyone born was born with a sinful nature. Enoch was born after Adam and Eve had sinned. Therefore, he was born with an iniquitous nature.

Like us, he could not communicate face-to-face with God while on this earth. He could not see God. The Bible says that anyone who sees God's face will die (Revelation 22:4). Having established this, we can see that Enoch did not visibly see God while he was in this world.

Therefore, when the Bible says he walked with God or followed God, we can conclude that he was following someone invisible. This is the whole essence of faith, esteeming the invisible above the visible. Thomas could not believe that Jesus had risen until he touched the hand of Jesus. Jesus told him in John 20:29 (KJV) - "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Enoch received the blessings that Jesus spoke about when addressing Thomas because he followed God without seeing Him physically. Faith in God always has blessings, and the greatest blessing of all blessings is to inherit eternal life. Enoch was privileged to receive the greatest blessing before the second coming of Jesus.

"Enoch became a preacher of righteousness, making known to the people what God had revealed to him. Those who feared the Lord sought out this holy man, to share his instruction and his prayers. He labored publicly also, bearing God's messages to all who would hear the words of warning. His labors were not restricted to the Sethites. In the land where Cain had sought to flee from the divine Presence, the prophet of God made known the wonderful scenes that had passed before his vision. "Behold," he declared, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds." Jude 14, 15." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 86.1, Ellen G. White.

Elijah

2 Kings 2:11 (KJV) – "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Elijah was another person in the Bible who did not face death. A chariot of fire took him to heaven. The event caught him by surprise when he was talking to Elisha. He lived a life of faithfulness to God, and like Enoch, God gave him the privilege of going directly to heaven without seeing death.

The question is, how did Elijah live?

Elijah predicted a drought in Israel as a punishment for Baal's worship (1 Kings 17:1). Faith is the opposite of fear. The spirit of fear is not a spirit of faith, and it is not a spirit of love. God punished the Israelites with drought so they could return to Him and access His blessings. He did not punish them because He is a cruel God who loves to see people suffer.

God chose Elijah to give the Israelites this hard message. It takes a lot of courage for one man to stand against an entire nation and tell them the truth. Many preachers in these modern times cannot preach the truth because they fear people will stop listening to their sermons. Others fear attacks from congregants or people on social media. Elijah notified the Israelites of the drought that was coming, and he did not refrain from telling them that it came as a punishment for worshipping Baal.

“Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. True love seeks first the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Those who have this love will not evade the truth to save themselves from the unpleasant results of plain speaking. When souls are in peril, God's ministers will not consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 141.3, Ellen G. White

“Would that every minister might realize the sacredness of his office and the holiness of his work, and show the courage that Elijah showed! As divinely appointed messengers, ministers are in a position of awful responsibility. They are to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering.” 2 Timothy 4:2. In Christ's stead they are to labor as stewards of the mysteries of heaven, encouraging the obedient and warning the disobedient. With them worldly policy is to have no weight. Never are they to swerve from the path in which Jesus has bidden them walk. They are to go forward in faith, remembering that they are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. They are not to speak their own words, but words which One greater than the potentates of earth has bidden them speak. Their message is to be, “Thus saith the Lord.” God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men

who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have." – Prophets and Kings, Page 142.1, Ellen G. White

Prophet Elijah was fed by ravens at the brook of Cherith (1 Kings 17:2-6). There was drought in the land. However, no matter how rough and tough the environment may be, God still cares for His people. If you completely surrender to God, faithfully observing His ten commandments, He will hold you not just as a treasure but as a peculiar treasure (Exodus 19:5).

Precious metals like Gold, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphire, and onyx are not found on the surface of the earth. One has to dig deep into the ground to find them through mining. They are rare, and finding them in massive quantities is almost impossible. Their scarceness and their highly valuable use make them extremely expensive. That is why they are referred to as treasures or precious minerals.

Exodus 19:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. [5] Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."

The Bible uses the words peculiar and treasure to emphasize how valuable those who obey God's voice are in His sight. God loves everybody (John 3:16), but He favors those who consciously choose to love Him back more than those who don't. In the parable of the prodigal son, when the prodigal son did contrary to his father's wishes, his father still loved him even though he allowed him to go away.

However, when the prodigal son came to his senses and returned to his father, his father loved him more than he did when he was gone, thus making a party. Those who obey God are highly precious in His sight, more than precious stones are in the eyes of those who partake in their trade. Therefore, the same way precious stones are hidden, and one has to dig deep to find them is the same way God hides us in His love so that nobody can harm us.

God's protection of those who fear Him is greater than all the highly secured vaults used to protect gold reserves and other precious minerals. God shielded Elijah from hunger when the nation was facing hunger because he was a peculiar treasure to God above all people. He was a peculiar treasure to God because he lived a life of faith. God provided for him through various methods.

After the brook dried up, God sent him to be fed by a widow in Zarephath. He ended up multiplying her oil and flour (1 Kings 17:7-16). Later, when the widow's son fell sick and died, Elijah raised him from the dead through God's power (1 Kings 17:17-24).

Elijah fearlessly confronted King Ahab and challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:1-19). He prayed for fire to consume his sacrifice, proving that Yahweh is the true God (1 Kings 18:20-39). Prophet Elijah did this miracle not to bring praises to himself as most false prophets do. He did it to glorify God. God will do mighty things through you if your highest aim is to glorify Him. Later, Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal at the Kishon Valley (1 Kings 18:40). Then prayed for rain to end the drought (1 Kings 18:41-46).

Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah, causing him to flee to Beersheba (1 Kings 19:1-3). He was comforted by an angel and given food and water (1 Kings 19:4-8). God never leaves His people. He follows them everywhere they go, providing for their every need. Elijah met God at Mount Horeb and received a new commission to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha to replace him as a prophet (1 Kings 19:9-18). Elijah anointed Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:19-21). He prophesied Ahab's death for seizing Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:17-29). He prophesied Ahaziah's death for consulting Baal-Zebub when Ahaziah was sick (2 Kings 1:1-18).

Elijah called fire from heaven to consume three captains and their men who came to arrest him (2 Kings 1:9-17). He parted the Jordan River with his cloak (2 Kings 2:8). He wrote a letter to King Jehoram of Judah, rebuking him for his sins and predicting his downfall (2 Chronicles 21:12-15). He left his cloak for Elisha, who inherited a double portion of his spirit (2 Kings 2:12-15). Elijah lived a life that was faithful to God. Sometimes he was afraid. For example, in 1 Kings 19:14, Elijah expresses fear that the children of Israel might kill him because of his dedication to God. However, he never allowed his fear to control his actions. His actions were always controlled by faith.

Jesus

Matthew 27:50-53 (KJV) – "[50] Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. [51] And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the

earth did quake, and the rocks rent; [52] And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, [53] And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

When Jesus was resurrected, many saints who had died were resurrected and taken to heaven. Jesus did not wait for His second coming to take them. They were taken before Christ's second coming. It was an unexpected blessing that God rewarded them for exercising faith while they were in this world. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:8 (KJV) – "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He can do what He did to Enoch, Elijah, and those saints to us.

John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We shall all inherit eternal life if we believe in God. Christ has done all the hard labor for us. Our work is to believe.

Hebrews 11:39-40 (KJV) – "[39] And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: [40] God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

We may not be translated to heaven before Jesus' second coming, like Elijah, Enoch, and those saints who were taken to heaven. There are many faithful men and women of God all through the generations who have died and are still buried in the graves and have not yet been taken to heaven, as we see in Hebrews 11:39-40. They have not yet received the promise of eternal life because God wants to save more people.

God wants to fill the mansions in heaven with as many souls as possible. Therefore, we need to spread the gospel widely to everybody (Matthew 28:19) so that more people can accept Jesus and receive the promise of eternal life. John 6:40 (KJV) – "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day." It is God's will for us to inherit eternal life. That is why He is constantly calling on us to believe in Him because He wants none of us to be lost.

John 4:14 (KJV) – "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The water which Christ has given us is His Word. It is one thing to see water in a dispenser or a container, and it is another thing to drink it. Not all people who have access to water drink it. Many

Christian homes have shelves filled with more than ten Bible versions and numerous spiritual books. Unfortunately, nobody in the entire household takes their time to read them. Often we behave like Esau, who despised his birthright. We despise the precious treasures that we have easy access to.

1 Timothy 6:12 (KJV) – “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” In this sinful world and born with our sinful nature, living a life of faith can sometimes be a struggle. That is why we are told to fight the good fight of faith. If we don't give up on it, we shall be victorious in the end, and we shall inherit eternal life.

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) - "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Obeying God's commandments is faith in action. It is not enough to profess that we are Christians. Our actions need to declare that we genuinely believe in God. We need to have God as our one and only God and observe His seventh day Sabbath. We need to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Observing God’s commandments cannot save you. We are saved by grace. We do not obey so that we get saved. We get saved first. After we accept Jesus us our Lord and savior, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts enabling us to obey all the commandments of God. John 5:24 (KJV) – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, we're grateful for the gift of faith guiding our journey. Help us walk confidently, shunning sin and fear. Like Enoch, Elijah, and other heroes of faith, may we believe in You and embrace blessings through faith. Strengthen us to live obediently, laying hold of eternal life. May our lives be a testimony to your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Using your talents, skills, and resources, list some things you can do to ensure more people get God's message.
2. Take a short walk with friends or family, discussing how faith impacts your lives. Share personal stories of overcoming challenges through faith. Conclude with a brief prayer of gratitude for the gift of faith.

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CHAPTER 16

FAITH IN GOD PLEASES GOD

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"Without faith, it’s impossible," God says,

To please the Lord we can’t with our ways,

Have fear, have doubt and have the darkest days,

Mix faith and love and have the brightest rays.

For faith’s the spark, the unseen light,

It brightens us up, makes clear our sight,

Keep the faith, fight a good fight,

Win the battle, by faith you are great in might.

Like seeds that grow from hidden soil,

Faith blooms beyond the toughest wall,

Faith in God is power, ask Peter or Paul,

Faith in God the best remedy to body and soul.

Noah’s ark built with wood and nails,

While others scoffed at the flood-bound tales,

Yet with each hammer, each steady swing,

He pleased the Lord, his heart believing.

Think of Abraham, who went out of his way,

To the land that God led him, he never said nay,

Obeying God, not knowing where to stay,

God blessed him and He will bless you, have faith and pray.

"By faith," they dared, like stars so bright,

Not by physical sight but inner light,

For faith's the coin in heaven's hand,

That pleases God, fulfills His plan,

So, live by faith, bold, unafraid,

Through valleys low and heights displayed.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJ21) - "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

The Bible tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith. This means that faith makes God happy, and lack of it disappoints God. God is delighted when we believe in Him, especially now that we cannot see Him. God wants to unite with us so that we can be able to do great and mighty things on this earth as He commanded us to in Genesis 1:28.

Genesis 1:28 (KJV) - "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

God called us to replenish the earth and subdue it. He gave Adam this command before he sinned. The word subdue means to conquer. If Adam had not sinned, he would have subdued the earth easily. Sin, which is a result of lack of faith, causes us to be mediocre in our endeavors. Therefore, the ordinary and the common become the order of the day.

The very few people who show faith become the great ones in society and we look at them and marvel. God's Word has principles that are as high as the heavens are from the earth. When we believe in it, the heights we are going to reach will be as unfathomable as heaven is from earth.

Hebrews 13:16 (NKJV) - "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Being generous is righteousness, it is an act of faith, and it pleases God. Acts 20:35 (KJ21) - "I have shown you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" The more you give the more blessed you become because God is a rewarder of those who have faith. Therefore, make it a habit to give sacrificially. When you do this continually, you will become more selfless and happier.

Genesis 13:14-17 (KJ21) - "[14] And the Lord said unto Abram after Lot was separated from him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; [15] for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust

of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee."

Abraham pleased God when he portrayed selflessness by allowing his nephew Lot to choose first. God was well pleased. The Lord told him to look in all four directions of the compass, north, south, east and west and promised to give him the entire land including what was Lot's. Abraham sacrificed his pleasure for the happiness of Lot. We should be willing to sacrifice our comfort for other people's comfort.

The people who produced remarkable inventions that have made the world a better place to live in sacrificed a lot of time to come up with those breathtaking inventions. Those who have built large corporations that have employed millions of people sacrificed time and resources to build them. The comfort we enjoy today is because of the sacrifices made by these great people.

Genesis 22:9-12 (KJ21) - "[9] And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood. [10] And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. [11] And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' [12] And he said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.'"

Genesis 22:16-18 (KJ21) - "[16] And said, 'By Myself have I sworn,' saith the LORD, 'for because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, [17] that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore. And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, [18] and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice.'"

God gave Abraham a son called Isaac after waiting for many years. God called Abraham at the age of seventy-five and gave him Isaac at the age of one hundred. God tested Abraham's faith by telling him to sacrifice his only begotten son Isaac, the son of faith. Abraham agreed to God's command, and he did not withhold Isaac from God. He understood that it is God who gives, and He has the right to take away whatever He has given. This act of faith pleased God and God

promised to multiply his seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore. He also promised to bless all the nations of the world through him.

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (KJ21) - "[9] And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him with sorrow.' [10] And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!' And God granted him that which he requested."

Jabez pleased God when he asked God for exactly what he wanted. He asked God to enlarge his border and for God's hand to always be with him. He asked God to keep him from evil that it may not grieve him. Whatever he asked God for was in accordance with God's will. God desires to enlarge your territory because He has commanded us to replenish and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). God wants to always offer us His hand of protection. God desires to keep us from evil that is why He is always advocating for righteousness. The prayer of Jabez was a prayer of faith and it pleased God.

Daniel 6:1-3 (KJ21) - "[1] It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, who should be over the whole kingdom; [2] and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first, that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. [3] Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."

Daniel was excellent even when he was in captivity. He was excellent in the kingdom of Babylon and in the kingdom of Medo-Persia as well. His excellent character pleased God and King Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar went ahead and promoted him (Daniel 2:48). His excellent Character pleased King Darius as well and he was the most preferred among the three presidents. Being excellent in the things you do is an act of faith because God is an excellent God, and it pleases God.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (AMP) - "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead), where you are going."

1 Kings 3:4-14 (KJ21) - "[4] And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. A thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. [5] In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I shall give thee." [6] And Solomon said, "Thou hast shown unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with Thee; and Thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. [7] And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father. And I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. [8] And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people whom Thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. [9] Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" [10] And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. [11] And God said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment, [12] behold, I have done according to thy words. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. [13] And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. [14] And if thou wilt walk in My ways to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

Solomon pleased God by taking his precious time to offer such a huge sacrifice to God. The sacrifice he made was great and it took a considerable amount of time to burn it. After offering this sacrifice, God appeared to him in a dream and asked him what he wanted. Solomon did not ask for money or the life of his enemies. Instead, he asked for an understanding heart so that he may be able to rule the people that God has given him to lead better.

God was pleased with this request of faith and gave him a wise and understanding heart. He added to him great riches as well, there was no one as rich as him. God also promised to lengthen his days if he would keep His commandments.

Hebrews 11:31 (KJ21) - "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with those who believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

Even though she was a prostitute, Rahab pleased God when she received the spies with peace and hid them. She did not perish with the other unbelievers in her city because of this act of faith. God always rewards faith. It doesn't matter who has acted by faith. If an unbeliever moves by faith and does something righteous, God will surely reward it.

Matthew 3:17 (KJ21) - "And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Jesus was the epitome of a life of faith when He was on this earth. He showed faith in God in everything He did. He walked in humility and was humble unto death, even the most humiliating and painful death on the cross (Philippians 2:8). He lived a life of full-time service to others. Therefore, God the father was pleased. What did God do to Him? Philippians 2:9-11 (KJV) - "[9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; [11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). There are many in the Christian world who claim that all that is necessary to salvation is to have faith; works are nothing, faith is the only essential. But God's Word tells us that faith without works is dead, being alone. Many refuse to obey God's commandments, yet they make a great deal of faith. But faith must have a foundation." - Faith and Works, Page 47.1, Ellen G. White.

"God's promises are all made upon conditions. If we do His will, if we walk in truth, then we may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. While we earnestly endeavor to be obedient, God will hear our petitions; but He will not bless us in disobedience. If we choose to disobey His commandments, we may cry, "Faith, faith, only have faith," and the response will come back from the sure Word of God, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). Such faith will only be as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. In order to have the benefits of God's grace we must do our part; we must faithfully work and bring forth fruits meet for repentance." - Faith and Works, Page 47.2, Ellen G. White.

What is that one thing that is blocking you from receiving God's promises? Is it doing your own work on the Sabbath day?

Faith in God pleased God. If you want to please God, have faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank you for this beautiful day. Please help me to have the motive of pleasing You in everything that I do. Help me to always have faith. You have promised that you are a rewarder of those who show faith in You. Please bless me in the areas where I have shown faith. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List some of the ways you can sacrifice your time to please God. How much time are you willing to spend on each one.
2. List some of the ways you can sacrifice your talent to please God.
3. List some of the ways you can sacrifice your material goods or money to please God.

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CHAPTER 17

HOW TO ASK FOR ANYTHING FROM GOD (SECRET REVEALED)

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God is our Creator, we are dependent on Him,

God owns everything, that's why we should ask Him,

God can not only create, but He can also save and redeem,

With God, you are the crème de la crème.

Pray to God the Father, and in the name of Jesus,

Pray through the Holy Spirit, who makes unutterable groanings for us,

Pray that way, and you'll be first, not last,

For all is possible in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Ask according to God's Word, which is God's Will,

His Word calmed the waters, peace be still,

His Word shelters you, gives you every meal,

His Word is meant to save and bless, not to steal and kill.

For God to listen, confess, and repent your sins,

Ask consistently and be faithful to God by all means,

Be grateful for everything, the losses and wins,

Have faith in God, and you'll mount on eagle's wings

Is it possible to ask God for anything?

Matthew 7:7 (KJV) – "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Why should you ask God?

God is our Creator

Genesis 2:7 (KJV) – "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

The phrase "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" means our lives are dependent on God because He created us (Genesis 1:27). The breath of life that we have is His, and He is the only one who can decide when to give it and when to take it away. He did the work of creation, including the creation of human beings all by Himself (Genesis 2:1-2). He did not send an angel to create us. Therefore, God understands us more than we understand ourselves. He knows what we need and the right time and circumstances to give us what we want.

Genesis 2:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. [2] And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. [3] And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

Creation is God's work, which He made. God created the world in six days and rested on the Sabbath, which is the seventh day. The Sabbath points us to God as the Creator and makes us realize we depend on Him alone. Exodus 20:8 (KJV) – "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." When referring to the Sabbath, the Bible says, "Remember." As you go about the week, the Sabbath principle should be on top of your mind, and you should never forget that you depend on God in everything you do. Therefore, ask God for everything you need because He is your Creator.

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God owns Everything

Psalm 24:1 (KJV) – “The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

Everything belongs to God (except sin). He owns our world, the entire universe. His ownership is bound on the fact that He created everything (Psalm 146:6). “Man cannot create; he can only manipulate what God has created. For instance, God created sand and rocks; man takes them and uses them to build a house.” – Pastor Randy Skeete. God created man and gave him a mind to think; man uses that mind and comes up with new inventions which in turn end up making new jobs.

Most times, we seek the wrong sources to get what we want. We seek the help of witches, wizards, and cults. We seek these sources to get riches, and redeem a lost property or spouse, among other things. It is foolish to do that because we seek sources that do not own anything. It is like asking a gatekeeper to give you what is in his master's house, and he does not have the property's right to ownership.

We can also liken it to those who have bought a piece of property from illegitimate owners only to realize they have been conned, eventually losing that property. Seeking the devil is positioning yourself to be defrauded because he does not own anything. He is just allowed to do his petty activities for a short season.

Matthew 4:8-10 (KJV) – “[8] Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; [9] And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. [10] Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Jesus Christ, when He was in this world, understood that the devil was attempting to scam Him and thus did not give in to his requests.

All is Possible with God

Daniel 2:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. [11] And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

Take note that for a King to call you to perform a specific action, you must have the best credentials in the land. King Nebuchadnezzar called the best wizards, magicians, astrologers, etc., to tell him what his dream was and what it meant, but they could not do that despite being the best in Babylon.

Innumerable people think their problems can be solved if they connect to a particular person, for instance, a prominent person in power like a politician, a wealthy spouse, or even the president. We forget that these people are human, and their power is limited.

As we can see in Daniel 2:11, the magicians and astrologers acknowledged God as the most supreme and powerful. Despite the pride that he possesses, the devil recognizes God's authority, but he always tries to lie to us.

The magicians, astrologers, and wizards could not fulfill the King's desire. King Nebuchadnezzar did not give up. He called for Daniel, and Daniel, through the help of God, was able to tell the King what he dreamt and the meaning of that dream (Daniel 2:12-49).

Here we learn that what is impossible with man is possible with God.

Hebrews 11:11 (KJV) – "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

Sarah could not bear a child because she was barren; however, God promised her that she would have a child, and she did when she was past the age of giving birth. Despite having two impossible conditions (being barren and past age), she could bear a child because she believed God would do as He said. Sarah's condition was impossible with man but possible with God.

Matthew 19:26 (KJV) – "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Notice Jesus did not say some things or most things. He said all things.

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV) – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Anyone can do anything, not by their power but through the power of God.

The Most Effective Strategies When Asking God

Ask God the Father

Prayers need to be explicitly directed to God the Father. There are many small fake gods; so, you must be specific when praying to the supreme one. This is the first prayer key; address your prayers to the correct entity. You cannot write a letter to the accountant and expect the CEO to respond; you cannot write a letter to the school head boy and expect the principal to respond. If you doubt this logic, try writing a letter to the university chef and see if the Vice-Chancellor will respond.

Jesus led by example as He always prayed to God the Father.

John 17:1 (KJV) – “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.”

Matthew 6:9 (KJV) – “After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.”

Luke 22:42 (KJV) – “Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.”

Ask in the Name of Jesus

John 16:23-24 (KJV) – “[23] And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. [24] Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Jesus said that all prayers need to be directed to God the Father in the name of Jesus. He told the disciples, “You have asked nothing in My name” He did not tell them, “You have not prayed." The disciples might have prayed, but not in the name of Jesus.

John 14:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Because of Christ's sacrifice, including His sinless life, voluntary death, and resurrection, God is willing to bless us. The profound grace that we enjoy is a result of the sacrifice of Christ.

The sacrifice of Jesus, which paid the penalty for sin, which satisfied the claim of God's law, His sacrifice is the just cause why God can answer prayers.

Philippians 2:8-10 (KJV) – "**[8]** And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. **[9]** Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: **[10]** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

While praying in the name of Jesus, you need to understand what Jesus did and pray in His name based on that sacrifice he made for you. In Acts 19:13, some men tried to cast out a demon and said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."

It did not work; the demons beat them up and chased them away. It did not work because they mentioned Jesus based on someone else's experience, not their own experience, meaning they did not believe in Jesus.

"To many Christians, Jesus is a nice man who lives in the pages of the Bible and not a reality in their lives." – Pastor Randy Skeete.

You must believe in Jesus, feel His sacrifice, and pray in His name.

Ask through the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:26-27 (KJV) – "[26] Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. [27] And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

The Bible says that the work of the Holy Spirit is to fill in our weaknesses. Where there is a weakness in our souls, the work of the Holy Spirit is to fill it and convert it to strength so that God

can hear our prayers. The Bible says that we do not know the right things to pray for, and the work of the Holy Spirit is to purify our prayer and make intercession for us according to the will of God.

Ask Humbly and Earnestly

Numerous Christians approach God with a proud heart and self-righteousness. They ask God questions like, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This question is very arrogant because the person asking assumes they are good. “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10).

In Matthew 19:16, someone came to Jesus and called Him good. This is how Jesus answered in Matthew 19:17, "And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Despite not sinning, Jesus was in this world of sin as a human being, and everyone born into this world has a sinful nature. Jesus always did the things that pleased God (John 8:29), but He was humble enough to say He was not good. Do not go to God as if He is indebted to you. God owes you nothing.

Joshua 7:6 (KJV) – “And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.”

Joshua went to God humbly and sincerely, and the Lord showed him what was wrong with them. Many people pray as a routine simply because we have a schedule to pray every morning and evening.

We offer God praises which we barely mean. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” – Matthew 6:7 (KJV).

Some people abuse prayer by using vain repetitions, thinking we must repeatedly mention a matter for God to listen to our prayers. All we need to do is to approach God with humility and a sincere heart. Ask yourself, when was the last time you prayed sincerely? When was the last time you fasted?

James 4:10 (KJV) – “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.”

Ask According to God's Will

1 John 5:14-15 (KJV) – "[14] And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: [15] And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

If we ask God for anything according to His will, He will listen to us. How do you know the will of God? It is simple. The will of God must be in line with the Word of God. If it is outside the Word of God, it is not God's will. For example, praying for someone to be saved is God's will because He says in His Word that He wills none to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). God will do everything possible to save that person you are praying for.

On the other hand, someone may do you an act of injustice, and praying for that person to suffer the same is not God's will because Jesus taught that you need to love your enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). He also said that you should not delight in your enemy's calamities (Proverbs 24:17).

Praying to be successful to further the glory of God and to be a blessing unto His people is God's will. Praying to be successful so you can command respect from those who despise you and treat you with contempt is not God's will.

James 4:3 (KJV) – "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

As we can see in James 4:3, the Bible says that God does not give you what you are asking for because you want to use it for your selfish desires. You ask for a promotion in your workplace so that you can build your house (nothing wrong with that) and be ahead of all your colleagues and friends (selfish desire). You ask God to give you a child, so your neighbors and friends can stop ridiculing you (selfish desire).

You ask God to give you an expensive car so your ex-girlfriend or boyfriend can regret leaving you (selfish desire). You ask for fame and prosperity so people can worship you and treat you like a god (selfish desire). You are asking amiss because you are not asking according to God's will. When you ask anything from God, attach a spiritual purpose so that God can have a viable reason to answer your prayers. Be sure to fulfill that promise that you have given God.

God did not give Hannah a child until she told God that she would dedicate her son to be a prophet of God. After that promise, God decided to give her a child. Attach a spiritual promise to what you are asking for and make sure you fulfill it. Do not promise and fail to satisfy the promise, that will be playing with God. You may want to travel and therefore ask God to open a way for you to travel; God is asking you in return for what purpose? If God does not see a tangible reason, He may not grant you that desire.

Whatever you ask from God should not be for your benefit alone. It should be to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and be a blessing to others (Philippians 2:3).

Daniel 2:48-49 (KJV) – "[48] Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave Him many great gifts, and made Him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. [49] Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

Notice that after Daniel had been blessed, he considered his friends' benefits. He was not selfish. He requested the King to give his friends positions as well. Do you care about others? Do you pray for others? Do you mention specific names when you are praying for people?

Be extremely specific when praying and attach a spiritual purpose to your prayer. Instead of saying, "God give me money so that I can help people," be specific. For example, "God, if you give me this amount, I will pay school fees for a certain kid in a certain school."

Prayers are potent if you quote God in His Word. Therefore, you need to know the Word of God. For instance, if you have studied and conducted your exams with integrity, but the professor is refusing to grade your paper, go to God like this, "Father, you have said in Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." Father, the professor's heart is in your hand, touch it and make him agree to grade my paper, amen."

The reason why this is immensely powerful is that He says that His Word will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). He also says that He has exalted His Word above all the names that He possesses (Psalm 138:2). God's Word is sure than the rising of the sun. God's Word is surer than what your eyes can see. Furthermore, God's Word is God's will.

Confess and Repent Your Sins

John 9:31 (KJV) – “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.”

John 15:7 (KJV) – “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

"How shall a man be just with God? How shall the sinner be made righteous? Only through Christ can we be brought into harmony with God, with holiness, but how are we to come to Christ? Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the Day of Pentecost, when, convicted of sin, they cried out, "What shall we do?" The first Word of Peter's answer was "Repent." Acts 2:37, 38. At another time, shortly after, he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19." - Steps to Christ, Page 23.1, Ellen G. White.

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."- Steps to Christ, Page 23.2, Ellen G. White.

"There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin. Such was the grief of Esau when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever. Balaam, terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with drawn sword, acknowledged his guilt lest he should lose his life; but there was no genuine repentance for sin, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil. Judas Iscariot, after betraying his Lord, exclaimed, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” Matthew 27.4."- Steps to Christ, Page 23.3, Ellen G. White.

"The confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a fearful looking of judgment. The consequences that were to result to him filled him with terror, but there was no deep, heartbreaking grief in his soul, that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God and denied the Holy One of Israel. Pharaoh, when suffering under the judgments of God, acknowledged his sin to escape further punishment, but returned to his defiance of Heaven as soon

as the plagues were stayed. These all lamented the results of sin but did not sorrow for the sin itself."- Steps to Christ, Page 24.1, Ellen G. White.

"But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in Heaven and on earth. The "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," illumines the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest. John 1:9. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven."- Steps to Christ, Page 24.2, Ellen G. White.

Before you ask God for anything, be sure to confess and repent. If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you (1 John 1:9). True repentance is asking for forgiveness and changing your ways completely. The reason is that God cannot abide by sin. If God's Words are in your heart and you are living a Godly life, John 15:7 says that whatever you ask from God will be given unto you because His Word will guide you on what to ask.

"The prayer of David after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate [p. 25] his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened, inspired his prayer. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness—to be restored to harmony and communion with God. This was the language of his soul: - (Psalms 51:1-14)." - Steps to Christ, Page 24.3, Ellen G. White.

James 5:16 (KJV) – "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Ask Consistently

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV) – "Pray without ceasing."

When you are praying for something, you need to pray for it non-stop without giving up until you get it; often, we give up too quickly. In the parable of the lost sheep, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?," Luke 15:4 (KJV). The keyword here is 'until.'

In the wilderness of those days, the shepherd was risking lots of dangers like thorns, wild animals, and robbers. However, despite the dangers, he will not leave the wilderness until he finds that one sheep. While Hannah was praying for a child, she would go to the temple and pray consistently until the priest thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:13).

God may decide to answer your prayer immediately. Sometimes He may take time, but what to us looks like a delay is God's right time. Sometimes, God may seem like He is delaying or taking time to answer your prayer so that you grow in faith.

Remember, Job kept praying to the Lord for restoration. The Lord kept him on hold until he prayed for his friends, then restored him immediately (Job 42:10). Some people feel that if they keep praying for something repeatedly, they are bothering God. That is not true. God's thoughts and ways are not like ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). He will never get tired of listening to you.

Be Grateful for Everything

Philippians 4:6 (NKJV) – "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Always thank God for everything that has happened to you, good or bad. Sometimes, something tragic may happen to you but underlying that dreadful event is a blessing. Avoid worrying, avoid complaining. When you worry, pray no matter how small the circumstance you are worrying about may seem. If it is worth worrying about, it is worth praying about. When you are about to complain, pray too, thank God for the situation first, then ask Him to guide you through it.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 (NKJV) – "Rejoice always."

Philippians 4:4 (KJV) – "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

The keyword in the above verses is always. Always means at all times, not just when things are going your way. Doing this will boost your level of positive thinking and attitude. A positive attitude is an exceptional intrinsic quality that few possess, as our minds are automatically geared to negativity (this is a result of sin).

Many get shocked when something good happens to them because they were expecting the worst. Most times, the good things surrounding you are more than the bad. You may have 99% good and 1% bad and fail to focus on the 99%, putting all your focus on the 1%. Hence your 1% ends up looking like your 99%.

C. Joybell C. says, “There is a magnificent, beautiful, wonderful painting in front of you! It is intricate, detailed, a painstaking labor of devotion and love! The colors are like no other, they swim and leap, they trickle and embellish! And yet you choose to fixate your eyes on the small fly which has landed on it! Why do you do such a thing?"

Focus on the bright things, and you will seldom see the dark and gloomy ones. Walt Whitman supports this by saying, "Keep your face always toward the sunshine - and shadows will fall behind you.”

Why should you be grateful for everything?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV) – “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

This verse gives a very solemn and substantial reason. The sole reason you should appreciate whatever God brings your way is that His will prevails. We serve a God who can see beyond all closed doors, beyond the secret of secrets and the thoughts of every living creature. You may think a certain thing is best for you, but God deprives you of having that thing since He understands the harm it will cause you. God understands the end from the beginning. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works.” – Psalm 145:17 (KJV). God is love (1 John 4:8).

As long as you are alive, His grace is sufficient for you. Therefore, be grateful if you are broke and do not know where you will get your next meal. If you have a relative languishing in the hospital with a dreadful illness as you pray for them, be grateful. You may encounter armed robbers, and they end up stealing everything from you, be grateful (they would have killed you).

You may encounter an experience where you have lost your job due to a false accusation, be grateful because the accusation would have been worse than it was. Be grateful because something good may come out of that accusation. Appreciate God at all times and ask Him to show you the way in whatever you are going through. He can make a way where there seems to be no way, just like He did for the Israelites when they crossed the red sea (Exodus 14).

He can make a way because He is the way (John 14:6). You may trust your path to the correct destination, but your path is wrong. God, in His love and mercy, takes you from the wrong path and puts you on the right path. “Sometimes it takes a wrong turn to get you to the right place.” - Mandy Hale, The Single Woman: Life, Love, and a Dash of Sass.

Psalm 37:4 (KJV) – “Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

Be thankful and delight yourself in the Lord always. Do you enjoy God’s presence? Do you enjoy reading the Bible? Do you enjoy discussing Godly things? That is a powerful key in unlocking your blessings.

Have Faith

Mark 11:24 (KJV) – “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

When praying, make sure there is absolutely no doubt in your heart. Doubting God is a severe sin.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) - “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

In the above verse, the keyword is must. To clarify the meaning, if you do not go to God to make a request (if you do not pray), you are not obligated to believe in Him. You can choose whether or not to believe. However, when you go to God, you have no option but to believe Him. In other words, the person who does not pray and the person who prays but doubts God are the same. When you are praying, believe that God is good, that He is just, that He is patient, that He is merciful, and that He wants the best for you.

Matthew 8:26 (KJV) - “And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”

Jesus’ disciples, even after seeing Him perform numerous miracles, were terrified when the sea started tossing. On that same day, Jesus performed mighty miracles like healing the leper, healing the centurion servant, healing Peter’s mother, and casting out demons.

The disciples would have remained calm because they had witnessed all those miracles. That is how most Christians behave. God, with His divine power, has taken you out of innumerable challenging situations, but you still doubt if He will be able to get you out of a problematic situation.

Faith in God is mighty because, with it, you can do more outstanding works than Jesus did in this world (John 14:12). Without it, it is impossible to please God. Our prayers fail to get answered mainly due to a lack of faith.

How to Exercise Faith

“How to exercise faith should be made very plain. To every promise of God, there are conditions. If we are willing to do His will, all His strength is ours. Whatever gift He promises is in the promise itself. “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift." - Ye Shall Receive Power, Page 196.4, Ellen G. White.

"Faith that enables us to receive God's gifts is itself a gift of which some measure is imparted to every human being. It grows as exercised in appropriating the Word of God. To strengthen faith, we must often bring it in contact with the Word.” - Ye Shall Receive Power, Page 196.5, Ellen G. White.

How Do You Grow Your Faith?

It is effortless. You grow your faith by having a relationship with God. The closer you are to God, the more faith you will possess. The way to develop that closeness with God is through constant prayer and solemn study of the Bible. Study the Bible more seriously than you study for academic

examinations. To have a clearer understanding of faith, read the whole of Hebrews 11 and meditate upon it. Read it slowly and microscopically, examine every phrase, Word, and punctuation mark closely, and ask God's Spirit to guide you. Moreover, the Spirit of God will reveal truths you had no idea about.

In Conclusion

The question is, who is qualified to ask from God?

Matthew 11:28 (KJV) – "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The answer is everybody. You may be hopeless, and the devil lies to you that he has locked you completely. The truth is, there is always hope as long as you are alive. You do not have to be the best Christian to go to God. Go to Him just as you are, and He will do mighty works in you that your friends will not be able to recognize you. The plan of salvation is also a restoration plan.

MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART! GOD BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I come before you today with a heart full of gratitude. Thank you for being our Creator, owning everything, and making everything possible. I am grateful for the lessons the essay shared and the guidance to improve my prayer life.

Lord, I ask for your wisdom and strength to apply these principles in my daily communication with You. Please help me come to you humbly, confess my sins, and seek your will in all that I ask. Teach me to pray consistently, trusting in your perfect timing.

I pray for your guidance and grace as I move forward with my action plan. May my prayers be aligned with your will and always offered with gratitude, even in the face of challenges.

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of prayer and the assurance that you hear us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

Read the Essay: Begin by reading the essay titled "Is it possible to ask God for anything?" to refresh your memory on the key lessons and principles discussed.

Self-Reflection: Take a moment to reflect on your own prayer life. Consider the following questions:

- Why do you personally believe it's important to ask God for what you need?
- Are there areas in your life where you need to confess and repent of your sins?
- Are there specific things you've been asking God for, and how can you apply the principles of consistent prayer, humility, and gratitude to these requests?

Action Plan: Create a simple action plan for your prayer life based on your reflections. This can be a brief list of steps you intend to take to improve the effectiveness of your prayers. For example:

- Schedule regular, dedicated prayer time each day.
- Make a list of specific prayer requests aligned with God's will.
- Express gratitude for both blessings and challenges in your prayers.
- Identify areas where you need to confess and seek forgiveness.

Prayer: Close this short activity with a brief prayer. Pray for guidance and strength to implement your action plan and to deepen your relationship with God through prayer.

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CHAPTER 18

THE LOSING BUT WINNING STRATEGY

In life's epic exam, a tale unfolds,

Choices to be made, a story to be told,

Abraham and Lot, making choices bold,

Abraham lost, yet grabbed the gold.

Abraham, allowed Lot to choose first,

Lot chose to be first, his choice made him last,

Abraham chose last, but God put him first,

Trust in God and you'll always be first.

Eyeing the lush terrain, Lot chose Sodom,

He made a terrible bargain, a choice void of wisdom,

When we put God first, we make a choice of freedom,

Seek first God's righteousness and His eternal kingdom.

Proverbs 3:5-6, the ultimate beat,

Trust the Lord, let the rhythm repeat,

In all your ways acknowledge Him, don't sway,

He'll direct your paths; He will make your day.

In every setback, a blessing in disguise,

James 1:12, a truth that never lies,

Blessed is the one who endures the test,

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For afterward, He shall receive a crown, the absolute best.

Love your foes, forgive the spite,

A losing game, yet pure and right.

Matthew 5 verse forty-four, a challenging feat,

Love your enemies, pray for those who mistreat.

Have you ever done an exam and filled in all the wrong answers but passed instead of failing? Sometimes righteous living may seem like one is failing, while one living a riotous life may look like they are succeeding.

Two people in the Bible were compelled to make a decision. It was like an exam of life choices. One filled in all the 'right' answers (according to the world's marking scheme) but failed, while the other filled in the wrong answers but passed (because he followed God's marking scheme). It seems outlandish, but it is something that occurred.

Abraham and Lot did an examination of life. Abraham failed but passed, while Lot passed but failed. How did Abraham manage to prevail over Lot? Because he did a righteous act backed up by a righteous motive, and Lot did an evil act backed up by a wrong motive.

Sometimes we tend to think that wicked people are the ones who succeed the most, but Ellen G. White writes in one of her books that it is only in appearance and not in reality that evil succeeds. God allowed the people building the tower of Babel to build it till it reached a certain height, but it failed before it was completed.

Abraham won over Lot by being humble and giving him the privilege to choose first. While we may think it is something that only happened in the Bible, it still occurs today. Countless people, including Christians, devise strategies to win but lose. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:27 (KJV) – "He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him."

Genesis 13:5-17 (KJV) – "[5] And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. [6] And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. [7] And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. [8] And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. [9] Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. [10] And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. [11]

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. [12] Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. [13] But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. [14] And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

Lot had a winning strategy, while Abraham had a losing strategy. Lot lifted his eyes and looked at the plains of the Jordan and saw that it was well watered everywhere.

"Abraham was Lot's senior in years, and his superior in relation, in wealth, and in position; yet he was the first to propose plans for preserving peace. Although the whole land had been given him by God Himself, he courteously waived this right." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.1, Ellen G. White.

Abraham, who was called Abram at that time, was older than Lot, he was the uncle to Lot, and he was the one called by God, and Lot was accompanying him. Despite all these, Abraham allowed Lot to choose first. Abraham did not care much about his prosperity. He wanted the strife to end.

Matthew 6:25-26 (KJV) – "[25] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? [26] Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

Abraham did not give much thought to his life, so he allowed Lot to choose first. He was more interested in Lot's success than his own. An exceedingly rare trait to see among human beings.

Philippians 2:3 (KJV) – "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Abraham esteemed Lot better than himself. Abraham had seen the beautiful plains of the Jordan probably before Lot saw them because he was the one who proposed to Lot to pick a side. Lot chose the best parts out of selfishness and left the worst for Abraham.

“Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! "Let there be no strife between me and thee," said Abraham, "for we be brethren," not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10), is the teaching of our Saviour. The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own. Such will heed the divine injunction, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Philippians 2:4.”- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.3, Ellen G. White.

“Although Lot owed his prosperity to his connection with Abraham, he manifested no gratitude to his benefactor. Courtesy would have dictated that he yield the choice to Abraham, but instead of this he selfishly endeavoured to grasp all its advantages. He "lifted his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, ... even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” The most fertile region in all Palestine was the Jordan Valley, reminding the beholders of the lost Paradise and equaling the beauty and productiveness of the Nile-enriched plains they had so lately left. There were cities also, wealthy and beautiful, inviting to profitable traffic in their crowded marts. Dazzled with visions of worldly gain, Lot overlooked the moral and spiritual evils that would be encountered there. The inhabitants of the plain were “sinners before the Lord exceedingly;” but of this he was ignorant, or, knowing, gave it but little weight. He “chose him all the plain of Jordan,” and “pitched his tent toward Sodom.” How little did he foresee the terrible results of that selfish choice!”- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 133.1, Ellen G. White.

Unfortunately, what looked good in the eyes of Lot was not good. That is why God tells us to trust in Him and not lean on our understanding (Proverbs 3:5). The Bible records that the men of Sodom were sinners before the Lord exceedingly (Genesis 13:13).

Dwelling in a place which is full of extreme sinners no matter how fertile the area seems, gives one no peace. You may be living in a high-end estate full of clubs and bars and cannot sleep because of too much noise. One may be living in a country or city that is highly developed, but there is high insecurity because there is no respect for the rule of law.

Some schools are high-end with the best facilities but full of negative influence. Therefore if your child is not firmly rooted in Christ, he comes out of them worse than he was when he entered.

Genesis 13:10 (KJV) – "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah." God eventually destroyed the place that Lot had chosen with all his possessions, but He did not destroy the location that Abraham had chosen. Lot decreased in possessions (Genesis 19) while Abraham increased (Genesis 24:1).

In this universe, there are four main points in a compass, north, south, east, and west. In Genesis 13:14, God told Abraham to look north, south, east, and west. In other words, God told Abraham to look everywhere. He promised Abraham that He would give him all the land he saw.

Abraham might have thought he had lost, but God gave him everything, including what was Lot's. Lot had chosen the best parts because he wanted to increase, but his selfish ambition resulted in him losing than winning.

God created all the laws of nature, but unfortunately, many trust in the laws of nature more than they trust in God. He ordained laws for the growth of plants, such as planting on fertile soil and watering. Like most human beings, Lot saw how the plains of Jordan were fertile and chose them because they provided the best environment for crops to grow. Abraham also understood that. However, instead of trusting in the laws of nature, he trusted in God, the Creator of all nature. God has ordained that man should work so that he can be able to earn a living and acquire basic needs. The same God who said that commanded us to work for only six days and rest on the Seventh (Exodus 20:8-11).

Some people have formed a winning strategy to work for seven days to earn more. Unfortunately, they end up losing more than they have made. Pastor Mark Finley gave an example of how his father could not get a job after being convicted about the Sabbath and deciding not to work on Saturday. For a moment, Mark's dad seemed to have lost.

After being rejected by several companies because of his beliefs, Mark's father was later hired by a Jewish company because the Jews believe in keeping the seventh day Sabbath. He greatly prospered and left the company to open his own company doing the same service as the Jewish company. His company succeeded than the Jewish company, and eventually, they ended up buying the Jewish company. The strategy that Mark Finley's father used was a losing but winning strategy.

In Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us certain principles of living successfully. Principles that seem absurd to many and are barely practiced by Christians today.

Most of us see them as not making sense because we have put our senses above our faith instead of our faith above our senses. On the mountain, Jesus was addressing His disciples (His followers). In other words, He was addressing people who are already converted. Such principles are not possible with our carnal nature. It needs a person who is fully converted to execute them.

Some of those principles are:

Matthew 5:38-39 (KJV) – "[38] Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: [39] But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The Bible says this because somebody who does intentional evil to you usually thinks they have won. Satan thought he had won by succeeding in making Adam and Eve fall into temptation. Jesus being God by His humility, came into this world not only as a human being (created being) but also identified with the lowest human beings.

Jesus was born in a manger, and the offering His parents gave was the offering of the poorest people. They could not afford a lamb. Instead, they offered two turtle doves. Nevertheless, Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). He was tortured and killed but resurrected on the third day and ascended to heaven. He ended up victorious because he used a losing but winning strategy.

Matthew 5:40-41 (KJV) – "[40] And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. [41] And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

If someone forcefully or deceitfully takes away something for you, he does that with the motive of him winning while you lose. Such people are practicing a winning but losing strategy. A strategy that is perpetrated by Satan. Those reading this who are experienced in life will tell you that whenever they faced such situations, they thought they had lost, but God blessed them with more.

Those who thought they had won had less than they had initially. The thieves and robbers in prison today once had freedom. Some of them might have been poor materially, but they had freedom. However, greed and selfishness made them steal so that they could acquire more than what they had. They stole for some time (it might have been a few days or many years). When the law caught up with them, they lost all the material possessions they had stolen, all that they had not stolen and their freedom (which they originally had).

Sin only results in losses, while righteousness results in profits. The Bible also tells us that whosoever shall compel us to go a mile with them, instead of hesitating and arguing, we should go with them two miles. When we do that, we will leave many speechless.

You may go two miles with a person who has asked you to walk a mile with him, then you end up hearing something new that will benefit you, or you end up acquiring a new idea or a special blessing from God. You may even learn a spiritual lesson that you had never learned through interaction with the natural world. Righteousness always pays. It pays in different ways, not one static way or one specific thing.

Luke 6:30 (KJV) – "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." As a child of God, someone who steals from you is blessing you in disguise. People have numerous ways of stealing from you.

Some will come in the form of borrowing money or something and not returning. In comparison, others will come in the form of using your services or buying your products and not paying for them. Sometimes such people do that not because they don't have money but because they have kept selfishness above you and your friendship/relationship with them. Such people have a winning strategy which eventually ends up in them losing.

If you look at most of them, if not all of them, they don't end up succeeding much as you thought they would. When you encounter such people, don't despair; instead, be happy and rejoice because they give you blessings in disguise. And if you are such a person, repent and give Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

When Zacchaeus was convicted of his wrongdoing, he returned fourfold to whoever he had taken from using falsehood (conning) and gave half of his goods to the poor. That is true repentance. Others have made it a habit always to borrow even when they don't have an urgent need. Some do this maliciously so that you lose while they gain.

Some people have made themselves to be constant recipients, but they never give. There is a reason why God made rivers and other water bodies to have inlets and outlets. While you receive, give, don't stack up everything and fail to give, attempting to make yourself rich. Some have done that, and while they piled so much, something arose that caused them to lose all their money. God is telling you to give to whosoever borrows from you according to your capacity. When you give, you may think you have lost, but you have won.

Matthew 5:43-44 (KJV) - "[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

Doing good to those who do wrong to you may seem like you are losing. However, repaying good for evil is a losing but winning strategy. If you do that, someone may see a difference in you and get converted because you cannot answer hate with hate; you need to answer hate with love.

You cannot exchange pride with pride; you need to exchange pride with humility. Living like that is not easy because of our sinful human nature. We need to ask God to give us the grace to do that. The grace to act by what God's Word says and not by our own emotions. Actions that are done through emotions, especially negative emotions, always result in loss, but actions that follow the instructions of the Bible will always make us win, even when we seem to have lost.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we embark on life's journey, we seek Your guidance and wisdom. Grant us the strength to embrace the losing but winning strategy that Your Word teaches us. Help us to see beyond the superficial victories of the world and to trust in Your divine plan. May Your grace empower us to love our enemies, to do good to those who harm us, and to walk in humility, just as Your Son, Jesus Christ, exemplified.

Lord, as we face life's exams and make choices, may we be filled with discernment to choose righteousness over worldly success. Grant us the courage to follow Your marking scheme, even when it seems unconventional to the world. Let our actions be aligned with Your Word, and may we find true success in pleasing You. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Activity

Take a moment for personal reflection on the principles discussed in this article. Consider situations in your life where you can apply the losing, but winning strategy mentioned in the Scriptures. Identify areas where you might be tempted to prioritize worldly success over righteous living.

Humility and Sacrifice:

- Is there a situation in your life where you can practice humility and sacrificial love, similar to Abraham letting Lot choose first? How can you put the interests of others before your own?

Dealing with Adversity:

- Think about a recent challenge or adversity you faced. Could adopting a losing but winning strategy, such as repaying good for evil or turning the other cheek, positively impact the situation?

Trust in God's Ways:

- Consider areas where you might be leaning on your understanding rather than trusting God's ways. How can you align your actions with biblical principles, even if it seems counterintuitive from a worldly perspective?

Giving and Forgiving:

- Reflect on instances someone may have taken from you, materially or emotionally. How can you apply the principle of giving without expecting anything in return? Are there relationships where forgiveness and love should be extended?

Remember, victories in life often come from living according to God's principles, even when it may seem like a losing strategy in the eyes of the world. Trust in God's promises and strive for righteousness in every aspect of your life.

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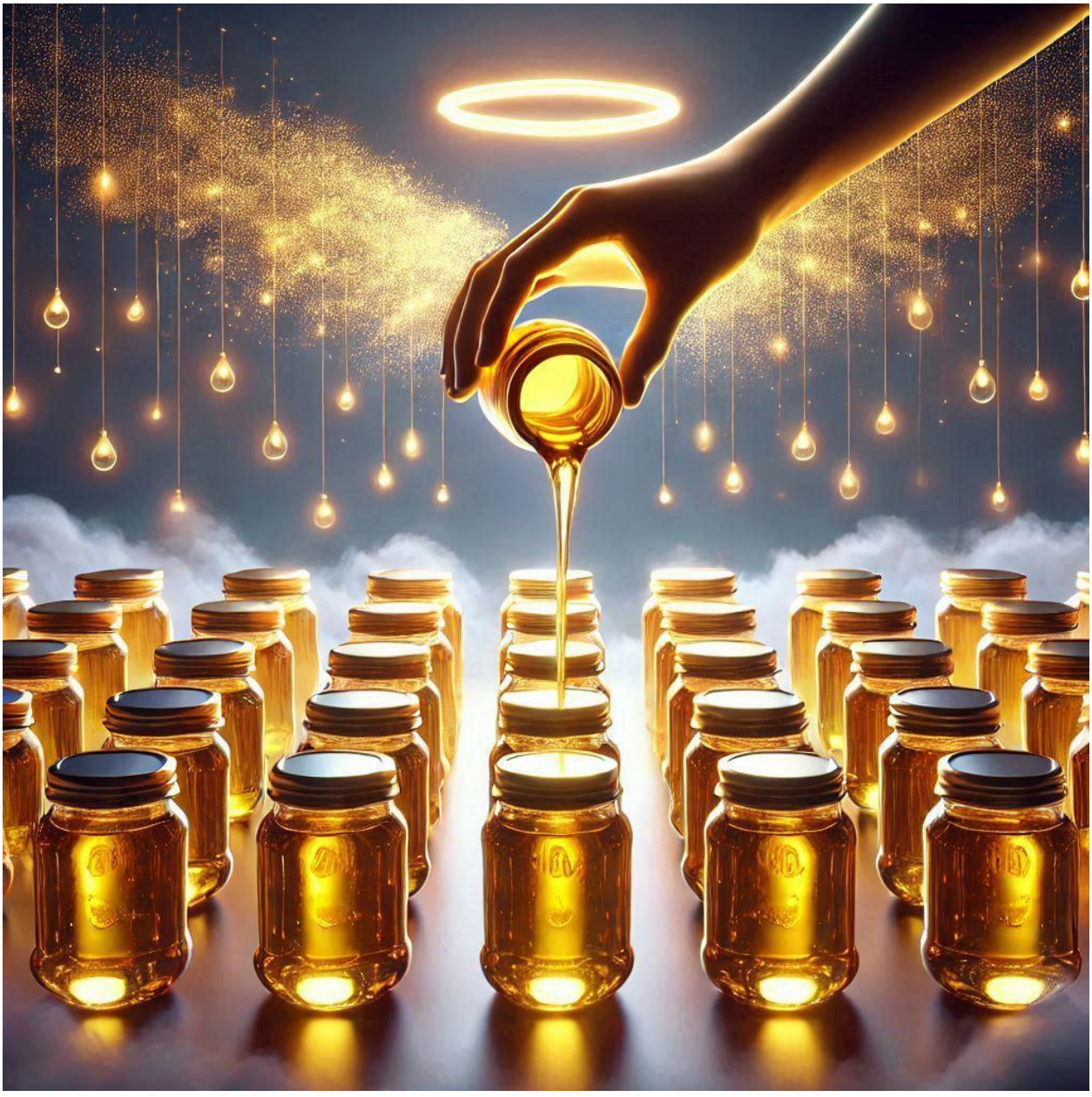
CHAPTER 19

EMPTY VESSELS



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In the sight of the Father, vessels stand,

Empty canvases in the Creator's hand,

Like clay awaiting the Potter's touch,

To mold them with love that's so much.

In the cosmic silence, vessels yearn,

A sacred journey, eager to learn,

The Creator fills them with knowledge new,

Taking filth from them, making them brand new.

Empty vessels, a symphony unsung,

Like ancient bells, waiting to be rung,

Like clothes washed, waiting to be hung,

God Himself works on them till they are done.

The words of Jesus, a divine decree,

"Pray without ceasing," for you and me,

No limits set on love, on God's Word divine,

Empty vessels, in His presence, we forever shine.

God's abundance flows, an unending stream,

Blessings beyond limit, like a radiant dream.

Infinite love, a boundless sea,

Filling empty vessels, setting hearts free.

Like the widow's vessels, our souls in God's hand,

Innumerable blessings, like grains of sand,

For in our emptiness, God finds His place,

Empty vessels, vessels of His grace.

So, in this journey, our purpose unfolds,

To seek God's wisdom, as His story molds.

Empty vessels surrendered and still,

Filled with His love, according to His will.

A common saying says, "empty vessels make a lot of noise." Do we also know that empty vessels are what God most needs?

2 Kings 4:3 (KJV) – “Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.”

Elisha commanded the widow to borrow empty vessels from her neighbors. He commanded her to borrow as many as possible. The widow would take those empty vessels and fill them with oil. For them to be filled with oil, they had to be empty. After borrowing those vessels, she should fill them with oil and then sell the oil in those vessels. She would not borrow the vessels and then sell them back to the people while empty because they would not be valuable enough.

The fact that the people gave her those vessels means that the vessels had no value to them. It is like throwing bottles in the dustbin after using the contents inside. What we usually need is the contents inside and not the bottle. The plastic bottle acts like a container to hold what is inside and to protect it from spilling out. Rarely do we sell empty bottles to people. Once we have finished drinking or using what is inside, the bottle loses value.

Therefore, when Elisha commanded the widow woman to take empty vessels, he told her to take that which has little or no value and then add value to it by adding the oil. At her home, she had a little jar filled with oil, and she was going to fill those vessels with that oil that she had.

Remember, Elisha, commanded her to take as many containers as possible. The oil she had was not enough to fill all those containers. Through His miraculous providence, God would increase the oil and fill all the empty vessels that the woman would bring.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. “Blessed are they which

do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." – The Desire of Ages, Page 302.1, Ellen G. White.

The vessels borrowed had value to the woman but had no value to the people giving them away. The bottles we throw away and the scrap metals have value to the people who collect them since they go and sell them to recycling plants but have no value to us.

God takes those things we perceive to have no value and gives them value. One example of this is creating man from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). We wipe our shoes anytime they get dust and are embarrassed to walk publicly when we have dust, but God used that dust to create a human being.

The Devil works by the principle of taking the best that God has made, the way he used the serpent, the cleverest animal at that time. God can take the worst and make them the best. He took Gideon and made Gideon victorious on the battlefield.

An empty vessel may have little value compared to a vessel that is full. However, a full vessel leaves no room to add anything unless it empties. You cannot add liquid mercury to a bottle filled with water because the bottle has no room left for that liquid mercury. You cannot add oil to a bottle that is filled with juice because it has no space left.

Bottles are usually priced according to the content that is in them. A bottle filled with water cannot have the same price as the same-sized bottle with one that is filled with oil. Half a liter bottle filled with diamonds is more expensive than a 10,000-litre water-filled tank.

The same applies to us. A person with a mind filled with God's Word may be small in stature and physically weak, but what he has is more valuable than one whose mind is full of unrighteous thoughts, no matter how big and strong the latter appears.

One who is living in sin and does not want anything to do with God can be likened to a vessel that is full and not willing to be emptied. He is comfortable with their current valuation and does not want to increase in value. Many are in stagnation because they are full vessels. They do not want to get emptied. Therefore, they cannot rise significantly because they are comfortable in their state.

Some have heard the Sabbath message and have been convinced that Saturday is the Sabbath, but because they were brought up in families that keep other days as the Sabbath, they chose not to

follow it and continue with their traditions. Some have read the health message, but they have decided that they will not follow it no matter what. So they get deprived of possessing better health. Some have been convinced that God exists but still follow ungodly traditional practices, while some continue to live as atheists.

Lack of knowledge causes many to suffer, but one who does not know is better off than one who learns but does not follow. One who knows and follows shall acquire blessings in their lives. However, one who follows and teaches shall get more blessings than one who follows but does not share knowledge with others. Matthew 5:19 (KJV) – “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

"Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38); for the Word of God is "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams of Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:15). The heart that has once tasted the love of Christ, cries out continually for a deeper draft, and as you impart you will receive in richer and more abundant measure. Every revelation of God to the soul increases the capacity to know and to love. The continual cry of the heart is, "More of Thee," and ever the Spirit's answer is, "Much more." Romans 5:9, 10. For our God delights to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20. To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling. Our Lord Himself has given the command, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), and this command is also a promise of its fulfillment. It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Christ should "all the fullness dwell," and "in Him, ye are made full.” Colossians 1:19, R.V.; 2:10, R.V.” – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 20.3, Ellen G. White.

If the woman brought ten vessels, God will ensure that those ten vessels are filled. If she got one hundred containers, God would ensure they were filled. If she brought one thousand vessels, God will ensure that they are filled. If she brought one million vessels, God will ensure that those one million were full.

God did not give her a limit on how many containers she should get because God has no limits. He told her, through His servant, “borrow not a few.” In other words, borrow as many as possible.

God never gives you a limit to how many times you should pray. He tells you, “Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17, KJV).

God never gives you a limit to the amount of love you should give Him. He tells you in Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) – “**4** Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord: **5** And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

God never gives you a limit on how many times we should have His Word in our minds. He tells us in Psalm 1:2 (KJV) – "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.” God never gives you a limit to the number of commandments you should obey. He tells you in Deuteronomy 8:1 (KJV) – “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers.”

God never gives you a limit on how many times and how many places you should teach His Word to people. He says in Deuteronomy 6:7-9 (KJV) – “**7** And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. **8** And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. **9,** And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

God never limits you on the physical location or the type of people to preach. In Matthew 28:19 (KJV), He says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” He never gives you a limit of the truth you should teach. He says in Matthew 28:20 (KJV) – “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

God who is infinite, who is God from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2), created us in His image (Genesis 1:26) and wants us to share in His infinite nature. His will was for man to live eternally just like Him. He never wanted us to be mortals like we are now.

John 10:10 (KJV) – “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Satan, whose purpose is to kill, steal and destroy, aimed to kill Adam and Eve when he tempted them to sin. After they fell,

Satan was excited because their lives would soon be cut short since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

John 10:11 (KJV) – “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Jesus sacrificed His life for the love He had for us. He says that the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. This illustration can be shown by David when he was a shepherd boy. He risked his life to fight the lion and bear to save the life of his sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-36).

Jesus is immortal, and He is infinite because Jesus is God. Jesus died on the cross so that we can be immortal as Him and live eternally with Him. God proved the Devil wrong that although we are fallen, through Jesus we have been redeemed to share in His infinite nature.

Therefore, when God calls us to do something and when He gives us a purpose to fulfill, He puts no limit to the extent we ought to fulfill that purpose. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV) – “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” The glory of God has no limit. Therefore, when we are doing service to God, we should do it with no limit. Ecclesiastes 9:10 compels us to do it with our might.

An author like Ellen G. White probably knew only one language, English. However, since God is a God who does not limit our purpose, He has enabled her writings to be translated into numerous languages. She is among the most translated authors in the world. Her education was also limited since she reached third grade, but she has authored books covering all essential topics of life, books that have greatly benefited those who have followed her wise counsel.

Some people have built successful schools by following her counsel in her book *Education*. Some have had good health because they followed the counsel of her book *Counsels on Health* or *Ministry of Healing*. Some have built successful churches because they made the book *Evangelism* to be their guide.

Ellen White's books offer a complementary source of wisdom and do not conflict with Biblical truth in any way. God did not limit her purpose to her earthly education. Her work went beyond her limited worldly education. Therefore, if you can't continue with your education because of a particular health challenge or circumstances that have made you not continue, stick with God. Ask God to show you your purpose and let Him be your guide.

Those who accepted God's call to write the Bible have impacted millions of generations. The Bible has been widely translated into almost all the languages in the world, including the native languages of various small tribes.

Authors, Poets, musicians, and many others have had their works posthumously celebrated. We read books, listen to music, and watch movies whose originators are currently dead. God does not limit anyone. We are the ones who limit ourselves. Elisha told the widow to bring as many vessels as possible. The widow was the one to decide how many containers she would bring.

2 Kings 4:1 (KJV) – "Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen."

When the widow approached Elisha, she only wanted to pay the debt her husband owed the creditors. She was distressed by that situation because she did not want her sons to be taken for slavery by that creditor. Her only need at that time was to pay that debt.

God looked beyond her situation. 2 Kings 4:7 (KJV) – "Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." God wanted her to pay off that debt and have something to sustain her and her children all the days of their lives. God wants to give us more than we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Many Godly people who are successful in this life will tell you that they never imagined they would be where they are now. Mary never imagined that she would be the mother to God (Jesus), she was just keeping herself pure, obeying God's commandments. Enoch never imagined that he would be translated and never see death; he was living a righteous life. Same with Moses and Elijah.

God always wants to give you more. He never wants to provide you with less, as many Christian teachings today depict. If God did not want the widow to have abundant resources, He would have given her a limit to the number of vessels she should take. He would have told her something like, "don't borrow more than ten vessels" or "don't borrow more than one million vessels." But he did not tell her that. Instead, He told her, "Borrow not a few."

Your purpose and calling may be in music. If that is the case, you should sing as many songs as you can as long as you live. Don't limit yourself to one single or one album. Sing as many songs as you can. You may be gifted in writing. Write as many articles and books as possible.

Your purpose may be in software development. Develop as many software products as possible and sell them to as many people as possible. Don't limit your market to your country only. You may be selling a product. Don't limit yourself to selling to your neighborhood or city only. Sell it everywhere. Elisha did not tell the woman who to sell the oil to. She left that for her to decide.

Proverbs 13:22 (KJV) – "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children" God wants you to leave an inheritance for your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He wants your blessings to flow to forthcoming generations. He wants you to create generational wealth. His wish is for your children and upcoming generations to suffer less that is why a man who lives an inheritance for his generations is called good.

Limiting yourself shows that you don't love your neighbor as you love yourself. Many have wasted resources living frivolous lives because they only care about their present lives and they care less about their generations. After they pass away, their children are subjected to suffering.

Leaving an inheritance for your children doesn't necessarily have to mean money. It is okay to leave money for them, but it is better if you can equip them with the needed skills and mental capacity to handle that money. Take them to school. Take them where you work. If you have a business, put them in that business's operations so they can understand how that money is made.

Children I have seen engaged in their parents' businesses end up being more disciplined and living well-balanced lives. The ones who squander their parents' wealth after they are dead are usually the ones who used to be provided for and were not given the knowledge of how that wealth was created. The ones who fight for their parents' wealth after they die are usually the ones whose parents did not take time to equip them with the skills of wealth creation and sustenance.

An inheritance for your children also means investing in your children's spiritual lives and moral upbringing. Take them to church and always have time for Bible study at home. Most importantly, lead by example. Leading by example will have a more substantial influence than mere instruction.

Some children cannot afford to go to school because their parents are drunkards. The fact that their parents are drunkards means they have money but are misusing it instead of investing in their children. Some beg on the streets because their mothers have sent them to beg so that they can provide for the family. Such parents only care for the present and have no business about the future.

Some families are suffering because their parents are involved in gambling. They have money to gamble but don't have money to educate their children. Some are suffering because their parents are busy working, particularly fathers. As the fathers do their best to provide for their families, they leave the work of teaching good morals and discipline to the mothers. This results in men who are effeminate if they are sons. That is one of the reasons we have a broken society: fathers are not present.

Some Christian-born men lead weak Christian lives because they never saw their fathers attending church. It was always the work of the mother to take them to church. If more fathers would be strong in Christ and pray for their families the way most mothers do, we would live in a world close to heaven's standards. God does not want us to limit ourselves. That is why he is bidding us not just to live for ourselves but also to live lives that will benefit our future generations.

Genesis 11:4 (KJV) – “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

One purpose of building the city of Babel was for the inhabitants to be contained in that one city. They did not want to be scattered abroad. When God made man, He told them in Genesis 1:28 (KJV) – “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

God commanded us to replenish the earth, but the people building the tower of Babel went against God's will by making a city so that they do not fill the world. In other words, they were limiting themselves while God wanted them to go beyond their limits. God's purpose must be fulfilled, and nobody can stop it. God confused them by bringing in different languages so that they could replenish the earth and go beyond their limits as He had initially intended.

The same way God increased the widow's oil and gave it no limit to the number of vessels it can fill is the same way God provides us with no limit on how to use our gifts. The more the widow poured the oil into the vessels, the more the oil increased. And the more she sold the vessels, the more money she had.

God has not given you limits on the number of times you should worship. He has said the Sabbath is only one day, the seventh, but that does not mean you should not give Him time during the other days. God sometimes can punish you for limiting yourself because you are making a waste of the abilities He has given you, the way the master punished the third servant when he failed to use his one talent (Matthew 25:26-30).

When God created us, He created us with a lot of value. However, sin comes to rob us of that value. A person who fills himself daily with the Word of God and holds it dearly to his heart will always generate great ideas. He will be sober in his decisions because nothing in his mind corrupts his decision-making cycle.

God is calling us to empty ourselves of the filth brought by sin that we have filled ourselves with so that He can fill us with His righteousness. He does this so that through us, our families, and generations can be blessed like the widow who gained money to feed her family through the proceeds of the oil she received. God wants us to not only be a blessing to our families but also to be a blessing to other people.

The widow did not use the oil she had gained for her family only. She sold it to other people. Therefore she was a blessing to other people. Failure to surrender fully to God does not give God room to work in us. You cannot put juice in a bottle that has a little kerosene in it, or a little diesel fuel in it. The fuel will contaminate the juice. Therefore, God wants us to surrender ourselves fully to Him so that He can empty us and give us the highest value we have ever imagined.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (KJV) – “**6** Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? **7** Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: **8** Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

God does not want any corruptible seed to be left in us because a tiny grain of sin will corrupt our entire lives the way weeds tamper with the growth of plants. He calls us to take out the old leaven that we may be a new lump. He does not want us to be diamonds that are covered in dust or hidden amid garbage.

God wants us to stand tall as cities set on hills that cannot be hidden, for we are the world's light (Matthew 5:14). We cannot lighten the whole world if we still allow a little darkness to overshadow our lights. God wants us to be a city set on a hill. Let's not drag Him back.

John 2:7 (AMP) - “Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the waterpots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim.”

For Jesus to tell the people at the wedding feast to fill the drums with water means the drums were empty. If they were filled with something else, they had to pour it out before filling it with water so that whatever was inside would not contaminate the water.

Filling the drums with water was something they could do, but changing it to wine was something they could not do. The same way borrowing the empty vessels from her neighbors was something the widow could do, but ensuring the oil only gets over once all the vessels were full was something she could not do.

God calls us to do all we can with our ability then He will do what is beyond our capacity. It is in our ability to stop contaminating our minds with bad movies and music and any evil thing that meets our eyes or enters our ears which we have control over, but it is not in our ability to purify our minds; only God can do that.

It is in our ability to take the Bible and read, but the Holy Spirit's work makes us understand. It is in our ability to pray for the sick and for the afflicted, visiting them wherever they are but it is in God's ability to heal them and uplift them from their situations. Therefore, we should do all we can and leave God to do what we cannot. Our work is to present ourselves to Him like empty vessels.

“If you have a sense of need in your soul, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, this is an evidence that Christ has wrought upon your heart, in order that He may be sought unto to do for you, through the endowment of the Holy Spirit, those things which it is impossible for you to do

for yourself. We need not seek to quench our thirst at shallow streams; for the great fountain is just above us, of whose abundant waters we may freely drink, if we will rise a little higher in the pathway of faith." - Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 19.4, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 5:6 (KJV) – "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are spiritually empty people. People who have a strong desire to attain the righteousness of God. People who are uncomfortable with their current spiritual state and want to gain more. They constantly strive for more because they know that the path of the just is like a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).

God has no limit on how much our lights should shine. He wants our lights to keep on shining brighter and brighter. If our lights are glowing today, they should be more brilliant the following day than they are today. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of progress. It is not a kingdom of stagnation or backward movement. That is why we may read a Bible verse today and keep on discovering new meanings to that same verse as long as we live because the depth and breadth of God's Word are infinite.

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness live happy lives, as the word used for blessed in the beatitudes is the same word used for happy. That is why some Bible versions use "Happy are they" instead of "Blessed are they". God highly favors those who hunger and thirst for righteousness because they aim to please God.

"No human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. But Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Revelation 3:20; John 6:35." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 18.3, Ellen G. White.

When we hunger and thirst for righteousness we seek to learn more about God than that which we have been taught in church. Many Christians only depend on what their pastors have taught them over the weekend or on YouTube, or while reading from authors like me but do not take time to study the Word of God for themselves. They rely on second-hand information rather than firsthand,

which is why many when they are called upon to teach or preach, their lessons have little authority. They are like the scribes whose words lacked authority because they mainly depended on what the prophets taught them and never sought God for themselves (Matthew 7:28-29).

One who hungers and thirsts for righteousness seeks God wholeheartedly. While studying the Bible, he compares various versions and sometimes uses material such as the Strong's exhaustive concordance (for the whole Bible) to find out the original meaning of different words in their respective original languages (Hebrew and Greek) in the Bible.

One who shows earnest and persevering effort to learn more about God will surely gain that knowledge. One who yearns to be filled with the righteousness of God, hungering and thirsting, will be filled indeed.

"As we need food to sustain our physical strength, so do we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sustain spiritual life and impart strength to work the works of God. As the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, so the soul must be constantly communing with Christ, submitting to Him and depending wholly upon Him." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 19.1, Ellen G. White.

"As the weary traveler seeks the spring in the desert and, finding it, quenches his burning thirst, so will the Christian thirst for and obtain the pure water of life, of which Christ is the fountain." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 19.2, Ellen G. White.

"As we discern the perfection of our Saviour's character we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness. A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God and the longing heart can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:5." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 19.3, Ellen G. White.

God fills those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. God cannot fill those who don't because He is a God who does not like forcing things. He has given us the free will to choose between righteousness and evil, blessing and cursing. It will be folly if we choose curses while we have blessings on the table ready to be received. Matthew 9:37 (KJV) – "Then saith he unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few."

“The words of God are the wellsprings of life. As you seek unto those living springs you will, through the Holy Spirit, be brought into communion with Christ. Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect, texts of Scripture will burst upon you with a new meaning as a flash of light, you will see the relation of other truths to the work of redemption, and you will know that Christ is leading you, a divine Teacher is at your side.” - Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 20.1, Ellen G. White.

Let’s present ourselves before God as empty vessels and allow Him to fill us.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before you as an empty vessel, acknowledging my need for Your presence and guidance. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and righteousness. Help me hunger and thirst for Your truth and love. May my life reflect Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

Take a moment of reflection today to identify an area in your life where you feel spiritually empty or in need of God's guidance. Open your Bible to a passage that speaks to that need and spend some time meditating on the words. Allow God to speak to your heart and fill you with His wisdom and love. As you go about your day, consciously seek opportunities to share a word of encouragement or kindness with someone else, being a vessel of God's love to those around you.

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CHAPTER 20

WHEN MORE IS LESS

Sin promises more, a deceptive chance,

Yet leaves us robbed of life's true glance,

With God the Solid Rock we shall always stand,

Without Him, we are building on sinking sand.

Without faith, more is sought and less is gained,

More may be found, but none is sustained,

Doubt does nothing but leave us chained,

With truth by your side, much more is gained.

A little sleep, a little sin,

In poverty and misery, the soul shall spin,

In the words of the Bible, we ought to be keen,

Find out what God is telling us and what He really means.

For in every sin, trouble and pain is sown,

A harvest reaped, yet often unknown,

Trust in the Lord and make His truth known,

The truth will set you free and make you reborn.

Students hustle in the late-night glow,

Trading Sabbath rest for a grade to show,

Less sleeping time, more knowledge to find,

Yet good results slip like sand through time.

1 Chronicles 21:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. [2] And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it."

1 Chronicles 21:7 (KJV) – "And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel."

David took a census of his army because he thought that the more they were, the higher chances of defeating their enemies. This mode of thinking and this behavior is quite common in the present times. We tend to rely on what we have or think we have more than we rely on God.

There was little faith in Israel in the olden days, but there is still little faith among Christians today. Many have been disappointed when they lost elections after they spent so much money. They trusted in their riches to enable them to give them victory, but their wealth ended up letting them down.

Various people have started businesses with sufficient capital to run all necessary operations in a company, but the firms have failed to succeed. Many organizations have been disappointed because they thought that by hiring the best talent in the market, their organizations would be highly profitable. They get disappointed when their organizations encounter huge losses despite hiring the best talent and implementing the 'best' strategies.

Some music record labels and sports teams have been disappointed when the best-talented people they signed failed to deliver results. We should realize that it is the hand of God that gives success in everything and not our resources.

Some students fail to keep the Sabbath so that they may have more time for their studies because they think that the more time they spend on their studies, the higher their grades will be. Some don't keep the Sabbath because they are paid hourly rates and want to work more hours to earn more money since the more hours one works, the more one gets paid.

Unfortunately, most of them don't get successful as they presume. God may allow them to accumulate all that money and then a calamity arises, and they end up losing it all, the way He allowed the people to build the tower of Babel for a certain period of time and then turned all their work to waste. God may punish them through their children, the way He avenged David by killing the son he had borne with Uriah's wife.

"The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Yet justice must be maintained. The death sentence was transferred from David to the child of his sin. Thus the king was given opportunity for repentance; while to him the suffering and death of the child, as a part of his punishment, was far more bitter than his own death could have been." – Prophets and Kings, Page 722.2, Ellen G. White.

The end of David's son caused a lot of bitterness to him. You never know the consequences or the punishments you will face when you commit a particular sin. Therefore, abstain from immorality. The reverse is also true; you never know what blessings will come from doing an act of righteousness. Therefore, do more righteous actions.

Proverbs 3:5 – 6 (KJV) – "[5] Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Like many of us, David leaned on his understanding. The Bible gives no room for one's heart not to trust in God. That is why it bids us to trust God with all our hearts. The Word of God gives no room for one to follow their way; that is why we are commanded, "In all your ways acknowledge Him." A heart that is 99.9 percent surrendered to God leaves 0.1 percent for the Devil to play with and the Devil doesn't want much, he is comfortable with that 0.1 percent. He looks for the slightest opportunity to enter someone's life and conquers and devours once he has entered. Therefore, we need to be watchful always.

The Bible says in Proverbs 6:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: [11] So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." The Bible says a little. Satan doesn't want much; he wants just a little. The sin David committed of numbering Israel did not look big, it seemed minor, but it led to God punishing Israel. What Adam and Eve did to the eyes of many seemed negligible, but it led to pain and agony in all succeeding generations.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable." "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is Thy hand: and high is Thy right hand." "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." If He is for you, who can be against you? "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for

Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Let us trust Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who will make all things work together for good to those that love the Lord.” -Signs of the Times, February 28, 1906, Ellen G. White.

Sin promises to give you more, but instead, it steals away from you what was already yours or was supposed to be yours. Sin has robbed many of the state of perfect health. Disobedience to God has made many people bankrupt because of bad spending habits. Sin has denied many of the privileges of peace of mind.

Sin can never give you more than you currently have, although sometimes it may appear to provide you with more. Robbers and con artists do whatever they do because they want to get more. Unfortunately, some of them get caught and spend many years in prison; hence, they don't enjoy what they have stolen, and their freedom is deprived. Some are subjected to paying huge fines and all they had stolen is taken away. Some get problems that will cause them to spend more than everything they had, and some are robbed of peace of mind. As little is much when God is in it, much is useless when God is not in it.

Psalm 127:1 (KJV) – “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

In this fast-paced world where the allure of "more" surrounds us, grant us the wisdom to seek Your guidance above all else. Help us resist the temptation to rely solely on our own understanding, wealth, or talents. Teach us to trust in You with all our hearts and acknowledge Your presence in every aspect of our lives.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we've leaned on our understanding. Please forgive us for thinking more possessions or achievements would bring success and happiness. May we surrender our desires for more and embrace the richness found in Your love, grace, and eternal strength.

Please guide us away from the pitfalls of greed, seeking more in worldly pursuits, and lead us toward a life that glorifies You in all things.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

Consider using a journal or a digital note-taking app for this activity. Here are some prompts to guide your reflections:

1. **Material Possessions:** Reflect on your possessions and how you can use them to help the less privileged.
2. **Time Management:** Consider a secular (work, school-related or leisure) commitment or activity that takes up much of your time. Prayerfully explore ways to do it effectively while spending less time on it.
3. **Digital Detox:** Identify a time during the day when you can disconnect from screens. Note how this "less screen time" positively impacts your well-being.
4. **Relationships:** Think about a relationship that could benefit from quality time rather than quantity. Plan a simple, meaningful activity with that person.
5. **Spiritual Connection:** Evaluate your spiritual practices. Explore how spending less time on distractions and more time in prayer or meditation deepens your connection with God.

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CHAPTER 21

WHEN LESS IS MORE

Like a flicker of light in the dark,

Our small kind acts can light a dark track,

With Jesus' love, we should play our part,

And the Holy Spirit's power will ignite our hearts.

Though small and seemingly insignificant,

We hold power to change significance,

With God, our efforts will be made stupendous,

For God's love is always tremendous.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,

And the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

The commandments of God are meant to give us freedom,

Obeying them will provide our little lives with endless length.

A mustard seed, so tiny and petite,

But with great potential to grow so grand.

With God's help, our efforts can be complete,

And touch the world with a loving hand.

In God's grand plan, we find our place,

With His grand love in His arms, we are embraced

Our small deeds embedded with God's grace,

Can transform the world for we are a Holy race.

This chapter is a sequel to the chapter titled *When More is Less.* In the chapter *When More is Less*, we studied that much is not much when God is not in it. We saw that you could have a lot of resources and skills, but when God is not at the center of it, you won't achieve much with all you possess.

1 Corinthians 3:6 (KJV) – "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Planting and watering were the work of Paul and Apollos, respectively, but it was God's work to give the increase. No matter how many seeds they planted and how much water they used to water the plants, if God withheld them from growing, they wouldn't have grown because He is the giver of all life.

God wants you to put maximum effort into everything that you do (Ecclesiastes 9:10) so that you can appreciate the abilities He has given you. He wants you to use your strength to glorify Him, not yourself. That is the entire purpose of maximum effort.

Psalm 127:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. [2] It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep."

Building a house requires a lot of effort and sometimes a lot of resources. However, if God is not in the midst of it, the hard work and the input of the required resources will be in vain. The tower of Babel is an excellent example. Another example is the man who built his house on sand (Matthew 7:24-26).

The man who built his house on sand and the one who built his house on a rock had one thing in common: they both built a house. The one who built his house on sand might have made a bigger structure than the one who built it on a rock. He might have been more concerned with the outward display than laying a strong foundation. His house was swept away when the storms came, while the other one's house remained steadfast. Both of them put effort into building a house, but one man's actions were in vain while the other one's effort was not in vain.

The Bible also says that the watchman watches over the city in vain if the Lord does not secure it. No amount of human security can prevent the Devil from breaking in. The Devil is more powerful than all human beings combined. He will do that if he decides to break into the most secured bank,

area 51, or even the white house. He is advanced in science and technology more than we are. The power of God alone can keep a place completely secure.

Psalm 91:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; [10] There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

Romans 8:31 (KJV) – "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And the answer is no one, not even Satan.

Job 1:8-10 (KJV) – "[8] And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? [9] Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? [10] Hast, not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." The Devil himself acknowledges that God is the ultimate protection, and He is the one who blesses the work of people's hands, profiting from their efforts.

Having established that, let us look at a few examples in the Bible that prove that little is much when God is in it.

Elisha

2 Kings 6:15-18 (KJV) – "[15] And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? [16] And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. [17] And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. [18] And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha."

Elisha and his servant were only two with no weapons of war. A large army with horses and chariots surrounded their city. Elisha's servant was frightened because they were so little and

insignificant compared to those coming against them. Elisha told him not to fear because the ones with them were more than the ones who were against them.

Hearing these words, Elisha's servant might have thought that Elisha was insane because, with his physical eyes, he saw that the people against them were more than the ones with them. Elisha being closer to God, could see what his servant couldn't. When you have cultivated a relationship with God, you view things differently from other people. Other people will see things from the lens of logic, while you will see things from the lens of faith. You will understand that what is happening in the background is more than what is happening in the foreground.

Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV) – “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." When you are close to God, you can see things other people cannot. You will be able to understand mysteries that others can't understand, like Joseph and Daniel when they interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, respectively.

God wants to show us all these things, so He is always beckoning us to move closer to Him. You don't need to rely on 'prophets' and other men of God to spiritual stuff. You can see them directly if you have a strong bond with God. Elisha prayed for God to open his servant's eyes so that he could see all that. When God opened the young man’s eyes, the man saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding them.

Elisha prayed to God to smite the people with blindness, and God did that. God will do anything for us if we walk in His ways. Even if the majority does not agree with you, you are the majority when God is with you. This is because when God is with you, you have God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, each having infinite strength. Each one of them can destroy the whole population of earth in the flash of a microsecond and bring them back to life again.

When God is with you, you have the entire angelic system by your side, and the angels are more in number than the human beings on earth. Not only are they more in number, but they are also stronger and wiser than all human beings on earth. The least powerful angel cannot be compared to the strongest nor the most knowledgeable human because we were created a little lower than them (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7).

Speaking on Elisha, Ellen G. White says, “So effectual had been his ministry and so widespread his influence that, as he lay upon his deathbed, even the youthful King Joash, an idolater with but

little respect for God, recognized in the prophet a father in Israel, and acknowledged that his presence among them was of more value in time of trouble than the possession of an army of horses and chariots. The record reads: “Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” 2 Kings 13:14.”- Prophets and Kings, Page 261.1.

Jehoshaphat

2 Chronicles 20:10-12 (KJV) – “[10] And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; [11] Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. [12] O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee.”

Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir armies came to attack the people of Judah. Three powerful armies against one army. King Jehoshaphat saw that there was no way that they could defeat those three armies with their might. They had to rely on the power of God. He saw that these three armies outnumbered them, and if they went to battle them, they would outpower them. Being a man of faith, he ran to God because he understood that no matter how many enemies they had, they could not be stronger than God.

Jehoshaphat humbly told God, "We have no might over this great company that is coming against us, but our eyes are upon you." God, through His servant, commanded them to sing songs of praise to Him. When the three armies came with their horses, chariots, weapons of war, and military strategy, they expected to meet the army of Judah armed with their weapons. However, instead of meeting the army of Judah, they met a choir.

When we imagine that scenario, we can see that God is very interesting. Moreover, the choir had no single weapon and no single war strategy. Nevertheless, the choir was not bothered by them because they were not singing about them. Instead, they were busy singing songs of praise to God.

The three armies were confused and overpowered that they started killing themselves. They killed themselves, and not a single one remained.

“It was a singular way of going to battle against the enemy's army—praising the Lord with singing, and exalting the God of Israel. This was their battle song. They possessed the beauty of holiness. If more praising of God were engaged in now, hope and courage and faith would steadily increase. And would not this strengthen the hands of the valiant soldiers who today are standing in defense of truth?” – Prophets and Kings, Page 202.1, Ellen G. White.

“God was the strength of Judah in this crisis, and He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 202.4, Ellen G. White.

David

1 Samuel 17:38-40 (KJV) – “[38] And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. [39] And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. [40] And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.”

“Though Saul had given David permission to accept Goliath's challenge, the king had small hope that David would be successful in his courageous undertaking. Command was given to clothe the youth in the king's own armor. The heavy helmet of brass was put upon his head, and the coat of mail was placed upon his body; the monarch's sword was at his side. Thus equipped, he started upon his errand, but erelong began to retrace his steps. The first thought in the minds of the anxious spectators was that David had decided not to risk his life in meeting an antagonist in so unequal an encounter. But this was far from the thought of the brave young man. When he returned to Saul he begged permission to lay aside the heavy armor, saying, “I cannot go with these; for I have not

proved them.” He laid off the king's armor, and in its stead took only his staff in his hand, with his shepherd's scrip and a simple sling. Choosing five smooth stones out of the brook, he put them in his bag, and, with his sling in his hand, drew near to the Philistine. The giant strode boldly forward, expecting to meet the mightiest of the warriors of Israel. His armor-bearer walked before him, and he looked as if nothing could withstand him. As he came nearer to David he saw but a stripling, called a boy because of his youth. David's countenance was ruddy with health, and his well-knit form, unprotected by armor, was displayed to advantage; yet between its youthful outline and the massive proportions of the Philistine, there was a marked contrast.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 646.4, Ellen G. White.

King Saul gave David his armor. It was a great privilege for the shepherd boy to be given the King’s armor to wear. King Saul gave David everything he needed to fight the war. David being a small boy, felt uncomfortable in that armor. He felt it was too heavy for him because he was not used to it. As a shepherd boy, he killed two fierce animals, a lion, and a bear. He killed them without having military attire. He was dressed as a shepherd feeding his flock in the wilderness, then a lion appeared, and he killed it. Another day, a bear appeared, and he killed it. He was confident that the God who enabled him to kill animals that everyone feared would enable him to kill Goliath, who everyone was frightened of.

1 Samuel 17:36 (KJV) – "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

David knew that someone who defies God stands no chance of succeeding. He knew that someone who hates God could not win against someone who loves God, no matter the authoritative position they hold, the strength they possess, or the resources they have. Sometimes they may seem to defeat the children of God, but eventually, God's children will rise as winners.

People thought they defeated Jesus by seeing Him die on the cross, but after three days, Jesus raised Himself from the dead. David needed no military attire to defeat Goliath. With his shepherd clothes, he was confident that he would defeat Goliath. He relied not on the weapons Saul gave him or the attire but depended on God. While growing in Christ, God has given you the grace to keep all the commandments, but you may miss out on one. It might be the fourth commandment or the seventh commandment. The same God who made you keep all the other commandments will make you keep that one, as He made David prevail over the lion, the bear, and Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:44-50 (KJV) – “44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. 45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46 This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. 48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

David prevailed over the gigantic champion Goliath with a sling and a stone. He had no sword in his hand. He had gathered five rocks but did not have to use all five. Instead, he smote him with the first stone. Goliath was laying his trust in his strength and his army's might. David trusted in the power of God when He said, "For the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands (1 Samuel 17:47)".

Elijah

1 Kings 17:10-14 (KJV) – “10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14

For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

The widow had a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruise. The food she had was only enough for one meal. She was sure they would die after she ate that meal with her son. God being a loving God, sent her Prophet Elijah. Prophet Elijah was not rich but a faithful man of God. Most people, especially in these modern times, are usually attracted to flamboyant pastors. Many have missed blessings because of despising men of God who are not materially wealthy.

Elijah goes to the woman and borrows her food. He assures her that she will always have food during the entire drought and famine period. That is hard to believe, especially since it comes from someone borrowing food. Luckily, she agreed to make the prophet a cake, and since God is a God who cannot lie and whose words are not wasted, she never lacked food, even a single day. The little that she had grew in abundance because God blessed and increased it. Some people think God is unfair because some seem more blessed than others. God is just. God presents us with daily opportunities that carry rich blessings, like the widow of Zarephath.

"In this poverty-stricken home the famine pressed sore, and the pitifully meager fare seemed about to fail. The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities. But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him." – Prophets and Kings, Page 130.1, Ellen G. White.

"No greater test of faith than this could have been required. The widow had hitherto treated all strangers with kindness and liberality. Now, regardless of the suffering that might result to herself and her child, and trusting in the God of Israel to supply her every need, she met this supreme test of hospitality by doing "according to the saying of Elijah." – Prophets and Kings, Page 130.3, Ellen G. White.

God sends the blessings we have prayed for to us in disguised ways. Unfortunately, many miss them because they are not conscious of God's word, therefore they lack faith which results in disobedience. God may send an opportunity to you through a child. He may send you a chance

through a pauper on the streets or anyone you despise. God may send someone to tell you to do what you don't like.

My late friend Dan, who used to be a civil engineer, narrated to me his story when he joined a certain church. Dan heard the voice of God telling him to be cleaning the church's washrooms. At that time, he was telling me that story, he had risen to the position of Head of Protocol in that church, but he started by washing the lavatories.

God has presented such disguised opportunities to all of us, but we have neglected them, so we never get the blessings we desire. A certain person was going through a difficult situation and needed some assistance. I assisted that person with what they wanted and then told them to take time and read my articles while studying the Bible. The person told me they couldn't see how mere words would help the situation. So they didn't read. Whatever blessings God had for them through the study of His word, they despised it.

My high school friend and former desk mate Jared owns a company and an NGO with offices in various East African countries and is slowly expanding to other African countries. The company and the NGO are called Jubilant Stewards of Africa. He got the name Jubilant and the idea when attending a Christian Union meeting in high school. Having given that example, the question is, how many blessings have you missed when you missed a fellowship, prayer meeting, or church service?

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2. These words have lost none of their force through the lapse of time. Our heavenly Father still continues to place in the pathway of His children opportunities that are blessings in disguise, and those who improve these opportunities find great joy. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Isaiah 58:10, 11." – Prophets and Kings, Page 132.1, Ellen G. White.

We pray to God for blessings and for Him to give us light,

But little do we know, He sends them in disguise.

We ask for wealth, fame, and success galore,

But God answers in ways we never thought before.

"To His faithful servants today Christ says, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." No act of kindness shown in His name will fail to be recognized and rewarded. And in the same tender recognition Christ includes even the feeblest and lowliest of the family of God. "Whosoever shall give to drink," He says, "unto one of these little ones"—those who are as children in their faith and their knowledge of Christ—"a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matthew 10:40, 42." – Prophets and Kings, Page 132.2, Ellen G. White.

I met Abdullahi at an event held in Nairobi. Kenya called the Blue Economy conference. The person is a Muslim. He requested me to take him a photo with my phone and send it to his wife because he did not have a smartphone at the moment. I agreed. From that day onwards that person has given me so many connections and presented me with numerous opportunities.

Abdullahi also gives me numerous opportunities to do with writing. He gives me anything to do with Information Technology, whether it is a website, software, or graphic design. Agreeing to take him a photo led to our great friendship.

I met Godwin in a bus while going home. Godwin has given me many information technology-related opportunities. He has given me work without proving that I am an expert or sending a CV. We had a conversation on a bus years ago, and I told him I am a technology professional, and from that day onwards, he has awarded me with many opportunities.

The Bible says in Matthew 5:47, if you only greet/talk to the people who greet/speak to you, what difference is there between you and an unbeliever? That small principle of greeting and talking to as many people as possible have paid off well.

However, when interacting with people, aim to bring them closer to Christ. Don't aim to receive from them, instead aim to give because it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). God

has presented everyone with almost an equal number of opportunities. The difference is that some take those blessings through faith and humble obedience, while others don't.

Those who are the most selfless gain a lot because there is always a blessing in every little good thing you do. Those who are selfish don't end up getting much. A certain YouTuber told his story of winning five hundred dollars at a pool tournament one day. He said his friend asked him to give him half of the money after he won. He agreed and gave him 250 U.S. Dollars.

The next day when they went to the same place to celebrate the money they had gained, his friend (whom he had given 250 U.S. Dollars) started playing pool with a certain stranger and won about 8,000 U.S. Dollars. Because his friend gave him half the money the previous day when he didn't have money, he gave his friend half of his money after he won. He gave him 4,000 U.S. Dollars. That YouTuber got 4,000 U.S. Dollars after giving his friend 250 U.S. Dollars. His money was multiplied sixteen times. If he had not given his friend anything, he would still be with the five hundred dollars.

Let us be like the widow at Zarephath who did not deny the prophet food, even though what she had was the last meal she was left with. Sometimes, God may reward us immediately, as He did with the YouTuber, and sometimes, he may take time to reward us, but he will always reward us for every kind act we have done for our neighbors.

Proverbs 11:24-26 (KJV) – "[24] There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. [25] The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

"Giving is a part of gospel religion. The foundation of the plan of salvation was laid in sacrifice. Jesus left the royal courts of Heaven, and became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. His life on earth was unselfish, marked with humiliation and sacrifice. And is the servant greater than his Lord? Shall men, partakers of the great salvation which he wrought out for them, refuse to follow their Lord, and to share in his self-denial? When the world's Redeemer has suffered so much for us, shall we, the members of his body, live in thoughtless self-indulgence? No; self-denial is an essential condition of discipleship." - The Signs of the Times, March 18, 1886, par. 2, Ellen G. White.

King Hezekiah

2 Kings 19:35-37 (NKJV) – "[35] And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. [36] So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home,* and remained at Nineveh. [37] Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his God, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place."

"The reign of Hezekiah was characterized by a series of remarkable providences which revealed to the surrounding nations that the God of Israel was with His people. The success of the Assyrians in capturing Samaria and in scattering the shattered remnant of the ten tribes among the nations, during the earlier portion of his reign, was leading many to question the power of the God of the Hebrews. Emboldened by their successes, the Ninevites had long since set aside the message of Jonah and had become defiant in their opposition to the purposes of Heaven. A few years after the fall of Samaria the victorious armies reappeared in Palestine, this time directing their forces against the fenced cities of Judah, with some measure of success; but they withdrew for a season because of difficulties arising in other portions of their realm. Not until some years later, toward the close of Hezekiah's reign, was it to be demonstrated before the nations of the world whether the gods of the heathen were finally to prevail." – Prophets and Kings, Page 339.1, Ellen G. White.

Sennacherib attacked the people of Judah with a huge army. Before he attacked them, he sent King Hezekiah the following threatening words in a letter: 2 Kings 19:10-13 (NKJV) – "[10] "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." [11] Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them, and shall you be delivered? [12] Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who *were* in Telassar? [13] Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?'"

We can see here that the Assyrian army was the most powerful army in the world at that time. They defeated all the nations that they fought. This deceived them into believing that the God of

the Israelites (the only true God) is the same level as the other gods of the other nations they had defeated.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:7 (KJV) – "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Sennacherib tried mocking God when He told Hezekiah not to think that the God they serve will be able to deliver them from his hands.

Psalm 2:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? [2] The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, [3] Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. [4] He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." God, who sits in the highest place (the heavens), laughs when people on earth (which happens to be His footstool) think they are more powerful than Him, like Sennacherib.

God did not send many angels to defeat the Assyrian army. He sent one angel who killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand strong and well-trained soldiers of the Assyrian army. One angel from God destroying a whole battalion evidently showed that when you are with God, you are the majority. Don't count the number of human beings who are on your side. Just be on God's side, and no one will defeat you.

"Since the days of David there had reigned no king who had wrought so mightily for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God in a time of apostasy and discouragement as had Hezekiah." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 340.3, Ellen G. White.

Jesus

John 6:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, [9] There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

Andrew looked at the five loaves and two fish that the boy held. He looked at the multitude and concluded that they were too few to feed the large crowd. From a logical perspective, five loaves and two fish are not even enough to feed one hundred people to satisfaction. That food was too

little in the eyes of any human being but not to God. To God, it was a lot. There is nothing that God created that has little or no value.

Genesis 1:31 (KJV) – "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

The keyword is *everything*. Whether large or small, rare, or abundant, everything God created was highly valuable. Nature has so much value that we are not aware of. God created dust which we step on and which we consider to be dirty. We rush to wash our hands when we touch dust or anything dusty. God took that same dust, which we despise and see little value in, and made man (Genesis 2:7).

Jesus took the two fish and the five loaves of bread and thanked God first. Gratitude goes a long way in increasing what we already have. That is why God says that when we return a tithe, He will open the windows of Heaven for us and hold the devourer for our sake (Malachi 3:10-11). He says this because returning tithe is one way of showing gratitude to God.

Some people are waiting till God gives them exactly what they want so that they can show Him appreciation. They may want a job paying them 10,000 U.S. Dollars per month but get one paying 300 U.S. Dollars. They start complaining to God and cannot thank Him till He gives them the one they want for 10,000 U.S. Dollars. They cannot return a tithe because they view it as too little and just enough to cater only to their basic needs.

God promised the Israelites to take them to the Promised Land, but before He took them there, He took them through the wilderness. The Israelites barely showed gratitude to God in the wilderness as they kept grumbling and complaining. As little as the bread and fish were before the huge crowd, Jesus thanked God for it, and then with faith, He began multiplying it. God increased it to the point that everyone in the group ate to their satisfaction, and they remained with twelve baskets.

The same God who multiplied the fish and bread then can do the same now. His power is not reduced. He wants us always to have an attitude of gratitude. Before He gives us great blessings, He will test us by giving us small ones.

Like the ungrateful Israelites who never entered the Promised Land, many have missed out on the bigger blessing due to a lack of thanking God for the small blessings. If we can't thank God for the small gifts, we can't thank Him for the big blessings. This is because when big blessings come our

way, we will still look for something to complain about. You are praying to God to make a certain dream come true; don't be angry because you have not achieved it yet. Be joyful and thank God for the journey.

If you want a dream to come true,

Be patient, and be thankful too.

Don't fuss and fight, or grumble and gripe,

God's timing is perfect, like a movie script.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

God wants you to work for six days and rest on the seventh day. Don't work for seven days because you want to earn more money. Don't study for seven days to gain more knowledge and pass exams. If you obey God and do exactly as He says, you will find yourself doing less and gaining more. When you rest on the Sabbath day, you get refreshed by God. After Sabbath, you will get a new spark and do more than the one who has worked till dark. So, take a break on Saturday, relax your soul, and let God fill you up like a bowl. He'll give you power, strength, and might, to take on the week with all your might.

Don't let money or ungodly knowledge be your guide,

On the seventh day, let yourself abide.

You may think working seven days is smart,

But trust in God. He'll give you a brand-new start.

Never despise the little. Put it in God's hands.

So let's spread a little love and a little light,

And make the world a little brighter, alright?

For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son,

So that whoever believes in Him will have eternal fun.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to trust in you with the little that I have. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Pray over every little resource that God has given you, and ask God how you can use them to bring more people to Him.

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CHAPTER 22

THE BEST WALKING STYLE

For we walk by faith, not by sight,

The best walking style is to walk in the light,

For we are saved by Grace, not by right,

Walking with Jesus will shine the light even at night.

To walk uprightly is to have faith and to be humble,

The best walking style is to be grateful, not to grumble,

Following God's direction, we will not fear nor stumble,

Walking with Jesus will make you stand tall and not crumble.

Shun the broadway and embrace the narrow way,

The best walking style is being in the potter's hand like clay,

Comfort and security we will get when on Jesus we lay,

Walking uprightly is walking surely, Proverbs 10 verse 9 says.

When you walk with God, God walks with you,

The best walking style is to do what God tells you to,

Walk with God, align your life with what's true,

Resist Satan, submit to Christ, and He will make you brand new.

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Introduction

Proverbs 10:9 (KJV) – “He that walketh uprightly walketh surely.”

The future is always a mystery. No one is one hundred percent certain of what will happen the next second, leave alone the next day. Many things in life usually catch us unaware. Breakthroughs catch us unaware. Accidents also come uninformed.

The Bible says that when Jesus comes the second time, He will unexpectedly come like a thief in the night. Nobody knows when He will come, whether it is day or night. Nobody knows which month or year He will come. The Bible also says in Proverbs 6:10-11 that poverty will catch the person who loves sleep unaware.

Now that we have seen how uncertain the future is let us go back to Proverbs 10:9. The Bible tells us in this verse that whoever walks uprightly walks surely. The outcome of whatever happens to us can be classified as either positive or negative. Each result falls within these two aspects. There is either life or death. There is no in-between.

We have light or darkness, day or night, blessings, or curses, and we do not have a third party in all these things. Therefore, whatever happens to you is either positive or negative. When positive things or blessings catch us by surprise, we feel excited. If we were facing a sad moment, the gloom suddenly disappears and is forgotten because of the joy that has come. Therefore, blessings, though uncertain, are always welcomed.

On the other hand, no one wishes for negative things to come to them. No one knowingly invites curses. Many people, if they knew what would befall them when they committed certain sins, wouldn't have done them.

Sometimes one may be walking on the streets, and then they hit a rock they had not seen and end up falling. One may be driving a car going to work, and someone hits them unexpectedly, or another unforeseeable adverse event happens to them that ends up ruining their day.

When the Bible says that he who walks uprightly walks surely it doesn’t mean you will be able to accurately predict the future. It means that you will avoid many problems that might happen to you. Most of the problems we face come as a result of the sins we have committed as individuals.

Sickness may come as a result of unhealthy eating habits. Poverty may result from laziness, wasting time, or lack of being excellent in what we do. I'm not saying these are the only causes of illness and poverty. However, if you put away sin ultimately, you will be surprised how your life will rise significantly.

If you put away covetousness and live within your mean as God desires, you will reduce the debt you are likely to get into. Many people have gotten into debt as a result of covetousness. Many have gotten into loans because of wanting to compete with their neighbors, peers, or fellow church members. They eat their seeds because they are competing with people eating their fruits.

Proverbs 14:34 (KJV) says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation." A nation is formed of individuals. Therefore, if righteousness exalts a nation, it also exalts an individual. It starts with an individual, for a nation to get exalted. An excellent example is Abraham, who God used to bless the whole world (Genesis 12:1-3).

When you live righteously, you will be able to do away with about 90-95 percent of the problems you are facing or are likely to face. There is a particular false narrative that implies that a Christian life is boring and full of misery. This deceptive narrative denotes that if you are a good person in this evil world, bad things will always happen to you.

Therefore, because of this belief, many are unenthusiastic about living a righteous life. Some have decided to put one foot in the church and the other in the world to be ‘safe.' Therefore, they go to church to feel spiritual but engage in corrupt deals at their various workplaces so that they may win in this world.

The Christian life is not always full of challenges as the Devil and some preachers depicts it to be. In the story of Job, God tells the Devil about Job and how righteous he was. Satan answered God by telling Him in Job 1:9 (NASB) – “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (According to Satan, Job feared God for something, he feared God for a reason). He goes ahead and tells God in Job 1:10 (KJV) – “Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.”

In other words, Satan was telling God that Job loves Him because he faces no problems since God has provided a covering around him, his family, and his possessions. This Job who was not facing problems, what kind of man was he? The Bible tells us in Job 1:1 that he was perfect and upright.

To prove the Devil wrong, God allowed him to take away everything from Job including his health. Therefore, Job ended up facing some of the worst problems. However, because he endured successfully, God blessed him with more incredible blessings than he previously had. Thus, he ended up victorious. With this example, we can see that righteousness can reduce almost all the problems we face.

Deuteronomy 28 lists the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. It does not list the curses of obedience and the blessings of disobedience. However, a few times, we may face challenges because we live in a sinful and imperfect world. Since we are in the world and interact with sinful people daily, they may harm us directly or indirectly.

However, we can reduce these problems significantly by responding with love instead of hate. For example, not returning a harsh word with a harsh word but a soft answer to a harsh word will turn away wrath. It may not always reduce the other person's anger, but it will do it most of the time.

Secondly, as Christians, when we face problems, they don't hit us as hard as unbelievers because we have hope. If Job had no hope when the problems hit him, he would not have endured the suffering without cursing God, as his wife advised.

Walking uprightly assures us of blessings. We may not know how God will bless us and when He will bless us, but we are assured that The Almighty God will bless us. Let us not have false beliefs of how troublesome a Christian life is and fear giving our lives wholly to God.

The Bible says in Psalm 34:8 (KJV) – "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Don't listen to what people say. Experience salvation for yourself and see how good God is. God is so good that even with our problems, He turns them into blessings.

We may be afflicted now with a particular problem only to realize a few moments later that a blessing was covered in that problem. Don't read those books or listen to talks about how righteous people are always prone to problems.

Practice righteousness in your life, from your actions to your words and motives, and experience the blessings that come with it. God rewards every little good act. Because of His infinite love, He may bless people who are unrighteous since He sends rain to the just and the unjust (Matthew

5:45). However, as a genuine child of God, there are blessings that you will experience that others will not experience.

Various people in the time of Job had material possessions, but Job had more than they all had. In the time of Isaac, various people in the foreign land of the Philistines were alive and healthy by God's power since all life depends on God. Still, it was only Isaac who was alive, healthy, and highly prosperous at the same time. He prospered as a foreigner in their land, and the people feared him.

In Exodus 19:5, God promises the Israelites that if they obey Him, they shall be a peculiar treasure unto Him. If the Bible used the word peculiar only, it would be enough. If it used the word treasure only, it would still be enough. However, it used the words peculiar and treasure in the same sentence to tell us how God places a special lofty price on people who are more obedient to Him than those who are not. He made the Israelites pass through the red sea while the Egyptians drowned (Hebrews 11:29).

“The very first step in the path of life is to keep the mind stayed on God, to have His fear continually before the eyes. A single departure from moral integrity blunts the conscience, and opens the door to the next temptation. “He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his way shall be known.” We are commanded to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves; but the daily experience of life shows that this law is disregarded. Uprightness in deal and moral integrity will secure the favor of God, and make a man a blessing to himself and to society; but amid the varied temptations that assail one whichever way he may turn, it is impossible to keep a clear conscience and the approval of Heaven without divine aid and a principle to love honesty for the sake of the right.” – Sons and Daughters of God, Page 111, Ellen G. White.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) – “[5] Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

When our minds are fixed on God, God will always direct us. We are often misdirected because of our inability to discern God’s voice. We cannot discern God's voice because we do not spend time with Him. When we receive a phone call from an unknown number, most of us can know who the other person is on the other end of the call if it is a person we talk with frequently.

If your spouse, parent, or child calls you with a different phone number, you can know it is them just by hearing the voice. However, if it is someone who you don't know or who you know but don't talk to frequently, there is a high chance that you won't be able to recognize the voice. The same applies to God. God knows all of us since He is the one who created us and is always with us, sometimes knocking on the doors of hearts of people who have not yet allowed Him to enter.

The fact that God has created us and is always with us shows that He knows us even better than we know ourselves. Unfortunately, we do not know Him because we rarely spend time with Him. Some of us only spend time with Him on Saturday or Sunday during church service and have no time for Him during the week. Most of us barely create time for personal Bible study. As a result, God becomes so unfamiliar to us which causes us to develop false theories and interpretations of Him.

Matthew 7:28-29 (KJV) – "[28] And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: [29] For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Most sermons or teachings in church lack authority because many preachers and teachers only preach and teach what other men have taught them.

The scribes lacked authority in their teachings because most of them were taught by the prophets as they helped them write the Bible, while the prophets were taught directly by God. Like most of us, most scribes relied on secondhand information while the prophets depended on firsthand information.

If you go to many churches, the teachings from the junior pastors or top church officials are almost the same as those from the senior pastors. Nothing different, nothing new. The infinite God who reigns from everlasting to everlasting has designed His Word to have infinite revelations aligning with the same truth. In each person, He has given us different revelations (that is why it is essential to fellowship and discuss the Bible with others). However, most of us fail to get these revelations because we do not spend enough time on God's Word.

Acts 19:13-16 (NKJV) – "[13] Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." [14] Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. [15] And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" [16]

Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

The demons beat up the men and won them because the men attempted to cast them out based on somebody else's (Paul's) experience of Jesus and not their own. God wants you to base your beliefs and understanding of Him on your experience. You might have the best pastor in the world in your church but don't be over-dependent on him. Don't enjoy being spoon-fed.

Many people summon pastors or other members of the clergy to pray for them because they don't believe their individual prayers can be answered. Some people even go to the extent of traveling to faraway lands in order to meet a certain Bishop or pastor or prophet who they believe has great power. Some false prophets have accumulated a great deal of wealth because of the high dependency people have on them.

It is not wrong to fellowship with a clergy member or to tell them to pray for you. What is bad is overdependence on them because they are mortals, they can die anytime, and you may have no one else to depend on. It is okay to ask them questions you don't understand, but before you ask them, make sure you have thoroughly studied that question guided by the Holy Spirit. Even if you fail to get the answer immediately, you will have increased spiritual knowledge, vitality, and growth.

We Walk By Faith

2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV) – "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

"All creation that took place between days one to six appeal in some form or fashion to one or more other senses which God has given to us, but what God did on day seven does not appeal directly to the senses. What He did appeals to a higher sense that is the sense of faith. On that day God blessed, He sanctified, He set apart, He hallowed. That's what He did for the seventh when He made the Sabbath. Therefore, the Sabbath requires faith. I need no faith to feel the heat of the sun. I need no faith to see a fish swimming. I need no faith to see a lion walk but I need faith to accept that this day which has as many hours as Monday or Tuesday or Thursday, this day is somehow special. It is special not because of anything I see, or I hear or touch or taste or feel. It is

special because God said so and I have to believe the Word of God. Sabbath observance is an act of faith in the Creator. God gave us the senses so we can hear, touch, and feel and enjoy our creation and enjoy each other but the Sabbath day, what God did on that day is appreciated only through faith. Or perhaps I should say, most effectively through the exercise of faith and faith is a sense that is higher than any of the five senses. Believe God, trust God. We are to live by faith not by what our senses tell us. We don't discard what our senses tell us, but we rise to a higher level by living by faith. And by faith we accept the seventh day Sabbath is holy, it is blessed, it is set apart by God and He brings with it blessings the other six days do not have." – Pastor Randy Skeete.

The best walking style is to walk by faith in God. Through trusting in God, we can obey Him because we believe He cannot do anything to harm us. We cannot live a victorious Christian life if we depend on our senses alone. I have heard some Christians saying that they cannot return tithe because the money that they have is too little, it can barely suit their needs. True faith is usually tested when you are facing the darkest times.

The God who made manna to rain from Heaven for the Israelites when they were in the wilderness will supply all your needs if you trust Him. All resources are His, and He knows exactly what you need. You may return tithe with your scarce resources then He immediately gives you a better-paying job. Sometimes He may give you more money miraculously after you have returned the tithe. He may even send someone (a friend, relative, or stranger) to buy your monthly groceries, which may be more than what you would have bought with your own money.

My friend James gave me a testimony of how tithing has been powerful in his life ever since he was in high school. He told me that when he used to return tithe from his pocket money in high school, he would receive the same amount or higher through various miraculous ways. Sometimes, he would get money during prize-giving day that was the same amount as his pocket money or even more than that.

One of God's promises in Malachi 3:11 is that He will hold the devourer for the people who return tithes and offerings so that the enemy will not spoil their produce. The majority of the Christians who do not return tithe or who do not give usually earn money. Some earn a lot of money but cannot account for its use. Some, immediately after they earn that money, so many problems kick in that they end up spending everything on those problems.

Some despise tithing and giving and accumulate a lot of money to do their projects. Once they have accumulated that money, they end up getting conned or lose their money in various other ways. Their lack of giving opened the door of the devourer. Some cannot keep the Sabbath day holy because of jobs that require them to work on the Sabbath. We should walk by faith, not by sight. We need to put faith above everything, including our circumstances.

"It is not necessary for us to know the results of our course of action before we surrender wholly to God. We do not need to see the way, or to know what the future will be. One thing we do know, because God has said it—the man that fears God and works righteousness will be accepted by Him. This is enough for us to know. Day by day walk before the Lord in humility and contrition. Your future destiny depends on your own course of action. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Be one thing or the other. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Your present happiness and your future well-being depend on your own choice. If you choose to follow Jesus, you must obey the Word, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)." – The Upward Look, Page 73, Ellen G. White.

Whatever will result from our righteous actions is none of our business. God keeps it as a mystery to test our faith. To test if we genuinely place His Word above everything else in the world. If God would tell each of us what blessing He will do to us when we do something righteous, most of us will stop sinning and live righteously.

If God shows each of us a vision of how glorious Heaven is, we will hate this world and do everything we can to go to Heaven. However, He does not easily do that because He wants us to live by faith, not sight. Deuteronomy 28:1-13 lists various marvelous blessings of obedience. It does not say the commandment we must obey to acquire a specific blessing. Instead, it says that we should obey all commandments (Deuteronomy 28:1). All commandments are relevant to all the blessings we want. Therefore, we need to walk uprightly because if we do so we are guaranteed to receive them.

The Bible tells us that another way to walk surely is to walk in love. Ephesians 5:2 (KJV) – "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

The best walking style is to walk in love. True love that we should impart to one another is the love that Christ has showered us with. John 15:12 (KJV) – "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." We are to love one another as Christ has loved us, not as our siblings or parents have loved us. This is impossible with our deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, but with God, it is possible. We need to ask God to give us the grace to do that.

When we have love and show it to others, we walk surely. Jesus had (he still has) an infinite love for us all. Therefore, He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). He had the power to escape from the cross and kill all those who tortured Him, but He did not do that because of love. True love does not abuse power. True love seeks to benefit others more than oneself. A snake bit Paul, but he continued preaching (Acts 28:3-6). When you walk in love, you walk surely because you love unconditionally, not expecting anything in return. When you love people like that, God will surely reward you even if they do not reward you.

John 14:15 (KJV) – "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." The law of God is a law of love. Obeying God's commandments in our thoughts, words, and actions portrays our love for God and our neighbors. If you genuinely love someone, you will not have evil thoughts in your mind about them. You will not give them fake exaggerated compliments in an attempt to deceive them if you truly love them. If you genuinely love people, you will be happy when they succeed instead of feeling jealous.

If you genuinely love God, you will always keep His commandments at the top of your mind as a governing tool to guide you in everything you do. Psalm 1:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. [2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

"If you wish to be truly happy, do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Practically, that comes straight home to every boy and girl. With whom do you take counsel? To whom do you confide your plans and troubles? Whose plans and ways are you following? Are you influenced by chums and companions? If so, you are not blessed or happy."- General Conference Bulletin, April 4, 1901, Page 64.11, Ellen G. White.

“Do not stand in the way of sinners. Do not spend your evenings on the street or your time in rude company. Do not go where sinful people love to go, —to the theater, to the card party, to the dance. Do not go where God is not honored. If you do these things, you cannot be truly happy.” - General Conference Bulletin, April 4, 1901, Page 64.12, Ellen G. White.

“Do not sit in the seat of the scornful. That is frequently the back seat of a church. Boys and girls who attend sacred services, and spend the time whispering, giggling, trading, writing notes, or in any other way slighting God's Word, are scorning the service of God, and insulting Him. To sit with such is to be reckoned with them. No one can do so, and be blessed or happy. It is a good thing for boys and girls to sit with their parents in church.” - General Conference Bulletin, April 4, 1901, Page 64.13, Ellen G. White.

“Our associations generally determine our character. If one takes counsel with ungodly companions, stands or goes with sinful persons, or sits with those who do not reverence God, he is sure to become a godless, sinful scorner.” - General Conference Bulletin, April 4, 1901, Page 64.14, Ellen G. White.

Long and close associations with sinners bring confusion, especially if you are not well-versed in God's Word. They bring confusion because much of the advice they are giving you may sound sensible but is contrary to God's Word. For example, revenging someone who has afflicted you seems sensible but goes against God's will. Sometimes they may even make you question your beliefs, and if you hang out with them for long, you may end up backsliding.

A piece of advice that compels you to sin, no matter how sensible it sounds, leads you on the path of darkness. Walking in sin is walking in darkness. Psalm 82:5 (NKJV) – “They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are unstable.” Those who walk in darkness will always stumble because no light will illuminate their way.

1 John 1:6-7 (KJV) – “[6] If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: [7] But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Others profess to be Christians but walk in darkness. Some are baptized church members bearing the Christian tag but have not fully surrendered themselves to God. They want to give their lives to Christ but are unwilling to let go of the things of this world.

The pleasures of sin are usually so alluring, but they last only for a season before one begins facing dire consequences. God wants our path to be clear, with nothing on the way that is blocking us. He desires that the light placed on that path shines brighter and brighter without the interference of darkness.

How Can We Walk in the Light?

Deuteronomy 8:6 (KJV) – "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him."

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 (KJV) – "[12] And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, [13] To keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"

The commandments are given to us for our good. We walk in the light by fearing God and obeying all His commandments. We are not given the option to select which commandments to obey and which ones not to, we ought to obey all of them.

God's grace is not to make up for our disobedience. It is to enable us to obey God more. Grace enables us to be more excellent in our walk with Christ. Whatever we can't accomplish by ourselves, grace will give us the power to accomplish.

Which Way Should We Walk in?

John 14:6 (KJV) – "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

"There are not many ways to Heaven. Each one may not choose his own way. Christ says, "I am the way: ... no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Since the first gospel sermon was preached, when in Eden it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, Christ had been uplifted as the way, the truth, and the life. He was the way when Adam lived, when Abel presented to God the blood of the slain lamb, representing the blood of the Redeemer. Christ was

the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God." – The Desire of Ages, Page 663.3, Ellen G. White.

Numerous theories say that the way to Heaven is more than one. There is only one way to Heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ. Currently, He is our high priest, always interceding for us. Secondly, He showed us how a genuine, devoted Christian should live, and we ought to follow His divine example. He never preached against commandments. Instead, He fulfilled them (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus kept all the commandments of God, including the Sabbath commandment, so He performed more miracles on the Sabbath than on any other day because the Sabbath is a day of rest. His will was for the afflicted to find rest through the healing He provided them. He was never selective about who to interact with. He interacted with everyone. He made Himself poor so that we can be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

This means that if Jesus was a businessman, He would endeavor to make His employees and customers happy and satisfied. He would esteem His employees and clients more than the profits He would look forward to in His business.

Jesus endured the toughest and the roughest temptations and trials. There is no single time that He gave in to selfish desires. He never sought to glorify Himself. Christ always sought to glorify the Father. Numerous times after performing a miracle, He would tell people to keep it a secret to avoid the praise going to Him. If we want to go to Heaven, as challenging as it may seem, we should follow this example. Jesus should be the ultimate role model of every Christian.

To Walk Surely is to Walk Humbly

A Christian walk is a walk of humility, and those who walk humbly walk surely. Pride closes doors, but humility opens doors. Pride stains the path, while humility cleanses it. When we have pride, we block ourselves from receiving new valuable information because we are unwilling to learn.

Without new knowledge, we cannot access new heights because what brought us here is not what will take us there. Therefore, we keep stagnating. Micah 6:8 (NKJV) – "He has shown you, O man,

what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

Treating people fairly is humility because you value everybody equally as children of God. If you are a judge, you will preside equally over a poor person's case as you will over a rich man's case. As a legislator, you will propose and implement laws that favor everybody. Showing mercy to and forgiving others is humility because you are willing to sacrifice the 'good' feeling that comes from revenge so the other party can be happy.

If You Want To Walk Surely, Who Should You Walk With?

Amos 3:3 (KJV) - “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.” But how strange the sight! While one of those so closely united is engaged in devotion, the other is indifferent and careless; while one is seeking the way to everlasting life, the other is in the broad road to death." - Counsels for the Church, Page 122.2, Ellen G. White.

It would be best to walk with people with whom you agree on the same beliefs. This will give you peace of mind because arguments will be few as you will have a common ground to agree on various things. Strife usually comes as a result of having different grounds. You may want to attend church on Sabbath, but the teacher wants you to do exams, so there is strife.

Sometimes arguments with unbelievers can be so convincing that you may question your beliefs. We need to spend more time with people who are of the same faith. This principle applies in our various partnerships, for example, marriage. Ellen White says that marrying a non-believer is treading on Satan's ground. Many people marry unbelievers with the hope of converting them. Most times this is usually very difficult, especially if it is a lady trying to convert a man.

Many unbelieving men may not convert because they fear that if they convert, they will look less manly and feel like they are under the lady's control. It is the same logic that most adults cannot take advice from children or people younger than them, even if they are right. This type of thinking usually blocks people from accessing various blessings. Some partners, especially ladies, may

agree to convert so that they get married. The conversion is not true because it is not always a conviction from the Holy Spirit.

Those who have converted to false religions may suffer in their marriages because of putting their men above God. God is not obligated to bless that union when He is not honored. Some may convert to the true church but will not appreciate it because they did not do it for the glory of God. They did it to get married. After they get married, most of them will always be in opposition to the teachings of Christ through their words and actions.

There is a threat that the children born from such unions may grow up confused. I have met people who have told me they are half Muslim and half Christian because one of their parents is Muslim and the other is Christian. God is not a god of halves. He tells us to choose one; either we are on His side or the other side, but there is no in-between. He tells us to love and trust Him with all our hearts, not half of our hearts.

Elizabeth and Zacharias the parents to John the Baptist stood firm against the wish of the relatives and friends and called their child John as God had commanded and not Zacharias as their friends and relatives had suggested. They did that because they both believed in God. That is a blessed union.

There are homes where the father or mother tells the children to accompany them to church, but their spouses oppose because even though they are ‘converted,' they do not fully believe in those teachings. Therefore, it becomes a struggle, and strife becomes constant in that relationship. The child may come up with an idea of going for a school trip on Saturday, one parent refuses, but the other accepts because their hearts are not fully consecrated in Christ. They don't understand the essence and significance of the Sabbath.

After one parent has refused, the other is compelled to agree to end the argument. Two cannot walk together if they disagree. Those who have not entered such marriages can avoid them. Ellen White writes it is better to break off an engagement than a marriage. However, those who have already entered should pray for their partners because divorce is prohibited in the Bible.

This does not mean we despise unbelievers because Christ Himself never despised them. We should love them and pray for them. If we find ourselves in situations where we can't avoid them,

we should be more intentional in our conversations. Before they invite you to parties, invite them to church.

“It is a dangerous thing to form a worldly alliance. Satan well knows that the hour that witnesses the marriage of many young men and women closes the history of their religious experience and usefulness. They are lost to Christ. They may for a time make an effort to live a Christian life, but all their strivings are made against a steady influence in the opposite direction. Once it was a privilege and joy to them to speak of their faith and hope; but they become unwilling to mention the subject, knowing that the one with whom they have linked their destiny takes no interest in it. As the result, faith in the precious truth dies out of the heart, and Satan insidiously weaves about them a web of skepticism.” - Counsels for the Church, Page 122.1, Ellen G. White.

A worldly alliance is not just in marriage, it is also in business. Avoid forming business partnerships with people who are not of the same beliefs. This may also cause contention. For instance, some people who believe in worshipping idols may want to keep them on business premises. This would not allow the only living true God to have His full glory, and God cannot share His glory with anyone.

Therefore, the business may end up lacking blessings because of such. When King Josiah made reforms, he ensured he destroyed all the false gods and their altars. He did not leave any idol remaining, even though people have the free will to worship whoever they want.

When You Walk with God, You Will Not Stumble Or Fear

Proverbs 4:12 (NKJV) – “When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.”

The Bible says in Romans 8:31 that nobody can be against us when God is by our side. No one can hinder your steps when you walk with God. They may attempt, but they won't succeed. Satan tried to hinder the ministry of Jesus by testing Him in the wilderness, but he did not succeed (Matthew 4).

The disciples tried to hinder the children from accessing Jesus but failed (Matthew 19:13-15). The people who killed Jesus tried to halt the work of Jesus, but they failed since Jesus rose again on the third day after they murdered Him.

When someone is running, it is easier to stumble than when walking since they are moving at high speed and have no time to check what is on the ground that they are running on. There may be rocks on the way, which they may end up hitting, or even thorns.

However, when someone is running with God, they cannot stumble no matter how fast they are moving. They would not stumble because they are running in the right way. Jesus is the way. Not only is He the way but He is the only uncontaminated way.

Walking With God Brings Security and Comfort

Psalm 23:4 (KJV) – "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

"We often hear the life of Christians described as being filled with trials, sadness, and sorrow, with but little to cheer and comfort; and the impression is too often given that if they should give up their faith and their efforts for eternal life, the scene would be changed to pleasure and happiness. But I have been led to compare the life of the sinner with the life of the righteous. Sinners do not have a desire to please God, therefore can have no pleasing sense of His approval. They do not enjoy their state of sin and worldly pleasure without trouble. They feel deeply the ills of this mortal life. Oh yes, at times they are fearfully troubled. They fear God but do not love Him."- From the Heart, Page 133.2, Ellen G. White.

"Are sinners free from disappointment, perplexity, earthly losses, poverty, and distress? Oh, no! In this respect they are no more secure than the righteous. They often suffer lingering sicknesses, yet have no strong and mighty arm to lean upon, no strengthening grace from a higher power to support them. In their weakness they must lean upon their own strength. They cannot look forward with any pleasure to the resurrection morn, for they have no cheering hope that they will then have part with the blest. They obtain no consolation by looking forward to the future. A fearful

uncertainty torments them, and thus they close their eyes in death. This is the end of poor sinners' lives of vain pleasures." - From the Heart, Page 133.3, Ellen G. White.

"Christians are subject to sickness, disappointment, poverty, reproach, and distress. Yet amid all this they love God, and love to do His will, and prize nothing so highly as His approval. In the conflicts, trials, and changing scenes of this life, they know that there is One who understands it all; One who will bend His ear low to the cries of the sorrowful and distressed; One who can sympathize with every sorrow and soothe the keenest anguish of every heart. He has invited the sorrowing ones to come to Him and find rest. Amid all their affliction Christians have strong consolation, and if they suffer a lingering, distressing sickness, before they close their eyes in death, they can with cheerfulness bear it all, for they hold communion with their Redeemer."—The Review and Herald, April 28, 1859, Ellen G. White.

When You Walk with God, God Walks with You

Leviticus 26:12 (KJV) – "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people."

One of God's attributes is that He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, meaning He is all-powerful, He is everywhere, and all-knowing. When you walk with an earthly teacher or any person who is older than you, most of the time, they will be imparting their knowledge to you as you walk. They will teach you things that you did not know. They may give you profound advice that you never heard.

When you walk with God, who is all-knowing, He imparts to you His infinite knowledge, and you keep learning. As you keep learning, you keep growing. The knowledge God gives you is excellent and profitable, so your life keeps getting elevated. Nothing can withstand you when you have an all-powerful God by your side. When God is with you everywhere you go, you will never encounter a problem and fail to come up with a solution because God is the Solution.

Walking with God Makes You Fruitful in Every Good Work

Colossians 1:10 (KJV) – "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

When you walk with God, you will be fruitful in every good work. Some people have great talents but haven't been able to use them to bear good fruits since they are not walking with God. They sing songs that may sound good but have messages that lead to destruction. However, when someone is walking with God, they will always bear good fruit.

John 15:4-5 (KJV) – "**4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." He who abides in God produces fruit that is higher in quantity and quality than He who does not.

Matthew 4:18-19 (KJV) – "[18] And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. [19] And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Walking with God brings excellent opportunities. Walking with God brings you into contact with the right people aligned with your purpose, who will make the road to your destiny less treacherous. When Jesus began His ministry, He did not have people to assist Him with the work of the gospel. He chose various people from various places working various occupations as He walked.

As Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two fishermen, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew and told them to follow Him. Jesus did not call everybody to help Him. He called certain people. He did not call people considered the best by society but called the right people.

Jesus never did anything contrary to God's will. His selection of His disciples was guided by the Holy Spirit and was approved by God the Father. When you walk with God, the Holy Spirit will guide you in various ways. The Holy Spirit may guide you through a scripture you read in the morning or through one verse you have memorized in your mind.

The Holy Spirit may also guide you through dreams, visions, and thoughts. To ensure that the voice of God is evident in your mind, you need to do away with anything that does not glorify Him, like certain movies and music.

Walking With God Will Make You Do Things that Are Impossible with Men

Matthew 14:25-26 (KJV) – "[25] And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. [26] And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear."

When we compare the church now to the early church when the disciples were ministering, it is beyond doubt that it has lost its power. During the time of Jesus, there were astonishing miracles. After the death of Jesus, when the disciples ministered, there were astonishing miracles as well. Some could bring the dead back to life as Jesus did.

A miracle-performing church is not proof that God approves a church. A church that God approves preaches God's Word without adding to it or subtracting from it. However, many people are pulled by witnessing wonders than by hearing words. A mighty church not only has words of power but also actions of power.

In the early church, people used to give so much that the church officials would stop them from giving. In the time of Moses, the people gave so much that they were commanded not to give anymore because the supply was overflowing. In the early church, whoever was rich would minister to whoever was poor and did their best to ensure that none lacked. In these present times, such kind of giving is never experienced.

Various studies have been done and have shown that only 10-25% of people in a congregation tithe. According to Non-Profit Source (2023), studies show that in families making more than 75,000 U.S. Dollars, only 1% gave at least 10% in tithing. The gospel would go far and wide if at least 50% of the church members faithfully returned tithes and offerings.

Because of a misunderstanding of God's grace, many have misinterpreted it to mean that they are free to do anything they want. Romans 6:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] What shall we say then? Shall we continue

in sin, that grace may abound? **2** God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Such has led to moral degeneracy in the church. As Christians, we have left little to be admired because we are adding more darkness to the world instead of being the light of the world.

"The church is not now the separate and peculiar people she was when the fires of persecution were kindled against her. How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! I saw that if the church had always retained her peculiar, holy character, the power of the Holy Spirit which was imparted to the disciples would still be with her. The sick would be healed, devils would be rebuked and cast out, and she would be mighty and a terror to her enemies." – Early Writings, Page 227.1, Ellen G. White.

"I saw a very large company professing the name of Christ, but God did not recognize them as His. He had no pleasure in them. Satan seemed to assume a religious character and was very willing that the people should think they were Christians. He was even anxious that they should believe in Jesus, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Satan and his angels fully believe all this themselves, and tremble. But if this faith does not provoke to good works, and lead those who profess it to imitate the self-denying life of Christ, Satan is not disturbed; for they merely assume the Christian name, while their hearts are still carnal, and he can use them in his service even better than if they made no profession. Hiding their deformity under the name of Christian, they pass along with their unsanctified natures, and their evil passions unsubdued. This gives occasion for the unbeliever to reproach Christ with their imperfections, and causes those who do possess pure and undefiled religion to be brought into disrepute."- Early Writings, Page 227.2, Ellen G. White.

"The ministers preach smooth things to suit carnal professors. They dare not preach Jesus and the cutting truths of the Bible; for if they should, these carnal professors would not remain in the church. But as many of them are wealthy, they must be retained, although they are no more fit to be there than Satan and his angels. This is just as Satan would have it. The religion of Jesus is made to appear popular and honorable in the eyes of the world. The people are told that those who profess religion will be more honored by the world. Such teachings differ very widely from the teachings of Christ. His doctrine and the world could not be at peace. Those who followed Him had to renounce the world. These smooth things originated with Satan and his angels. They formed the plan, and nominal professors carried it out. Pleasing fables were taught and readily received, and hypocrites and open sinners united with the church. If the truth had been preached in its purity,

it would soon have shut out this class. But there was no difference between the professed followers of Christ and the world. I saw that if the false covering had been torn off from the members of the churches, there would have been revealed such iniquity, vileness, and corruption that the most diffident child of God would have had no hesitancy in calling these professed Christians by their right name, children of their father, the Devil; for his works they did." - Early Writings, Page 228.1, Ellen G. White.

God Will Do For You Beyond What You Imagine When You Walk With Him

Genesis 5:22-24 (KJV) – "[22] And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: [23] And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: [24] And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Hebrews 11:5 (KJV) – "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

When Enoch was walking with God, He did not imagine that God would directly translate him to Heaven without tasting death. He was living a righteous life. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If you walk with Him, the God who translated Enoch straight to Heaven can do the same now. However, God blesses people differently.

Not all righteous people in the Bible and even now are taken to Heaven directly. Solomon was blessed with great wisdom and wealth such that there was no one like him before, and there has been none like him till now. Rahab was blessed by being the only one in the city who was spared with her family.

Mary's walk with God was blessed by being given the privilege of being the mother of Jesus. She is the only woman in the world to receive such a blessing. There would never be a rebirth of Jesus again. Therefore, that occurrence makes her highly privileged.

Deuteronomy 5:33 (NKJV) – “You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.”

Walking with God is the best walking style.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You in humble surrender, needing Your guidance. As we reflect on Proverbs 10:9, help us to walk uprightly in Your ways. Grant us the wisdom to navigate the uncertainties of life with faith and obedience. May our steps be aligned with Your Word, and may we find assurance in Proverbs 10:9. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

Take a moment to meditate on Proverbs 10:9, focusing on the concept of walking uprightly. Consider one specific area in your life where you can align your actions with God's principles. It could be in your relationships, work, or personal habits. Write a simple action plan to walk more uprightly in that specific area. Commit it to prayer. During the day, reflect on your commitment and seek God's strength to help you walk in His ways.

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CHAPTER 23

THE SEED IN YOU

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The seed in you is a precious seed,

The seed in you is a seed indeed,

The seed in you should be a seed in deed,

The seed in you should be kept away from weed.

The seed in you is meant to grow,

The seed in you is meant to blow,

The seed in you is more captivating than a lion's paw,

The seed in you is more significant than you know.

The seed in you is meant to make you a leader,

The seed in you is meant to make you a winner,

The seed in you is meant to make you breakfast, lunch and dinner,

The seed in you is more powerful than Hurricane Katrina.

The seed in you is planted in you by God,

The seed in you should grow at home and abroad,

The seed in you should give thanks to the Lord,

The seed in you should warm the cold.

Genesis 1:11 (KJV) - "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so."

In this verse, let us focus on the phrase "whose seed is in itself." God designed all living things, plants, animals, and man, so they can only bring forth living things of the same kind. There is no way a mango seed can bring forth an apple tree. There is no way a dog can give birth to a cat or a lion, or an ape can give birth to a human being. This Bible text proves that the scientific theory of evolution is a lie.

The wisdom of the Bible tells us that the seed lies within the fruit. Imagine this: that tiny seed, when nurtured and planted in the soil, blossoms into a tree bearing a bounty of fruits, all of the same kind. Bishop Wayne Malcolm passionately reminds us, "You can count the number of fruits in a seed, but you cannot count the number of seeds in a fruit."

It's a profound truth: God has entrusted each of us with at least one seed. What does this mean? It means that within you lies the power to overcome your challenges, gifted by the Divine. Consider this: the solutions to your problems are already within you, waiting to be realized.

Many seek happiness in external pursuits – relationships, indulging in pleasures like alcohol – only to find disappointment. But let me tell you, true fulfillment doesn't come from outside sources. It's found within, where God has already planted the seeds of greatness. Embrace this truth, and you'll discover a wellspring of joy and contentment that no external circumstance can shake.

Some people think that it is the responsibility of others to solve their financial problems. So, their work is to blame the government or wealthy relatives for their economic misfortunes. The same people have been given gifts by God, which, if dedicated and surrendered to God, they will be astonished at how far their underestimated potential can reach.

“God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the first-born of all in his house and of all the families in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his

men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7. Did men but realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow." – Christ Object Lessons, Page 85, Ellen G. White.

God has given every living thing seed. Therefore, He expects us to bear fruit. It may be challenging to find out what your gift is, but if you ask God, He will indeed reveal it to you. And if you can use your gift to the maximum potential to glorify God, you will be surprised at how many people your gift can touch. God has placed solutions inside you. That is why He brought Eve out of Adam, and that is why He brings offspring/children out of a person.

Most times, when a child is brought into the world, they resemble the mother or the father. This very logic of reproduction also means that you attract who you are and what you are. Don't expect to attract or find love while in yourself there is no love in you. If you are the type of person who holds contempt in your heart for other people, you will attract the same thing. This is not the law of attraction; this is how God designed things. Therefore, if you are looking for a life partner, improve yourself first. List down all qualities you would like the other person to have and work on having those qualities first. The same applies if you are looking for clients for your business. You may be looking for honest clients who pay you immediately. Seek to have those qualities first. You may be experiencing clients who delay your payments or who are dishonest. That may be God's wake-up call for you to change your ways.

Genesis 1:12 (KJV) - "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." - God has already put a seed inside you and ordained specific laws on how to grow that grain and those laws are listed in Exodus 20 as the Ten Commandments. If you follow those laws, you will be very prosperous.

One of the promises of God in following the Ten Commandments is that you shall be the lenders and not the borrowers (Deuteronomy 28:12). Let's put that into perspective, commandment ten says that thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's property (Exodus 20:17).

Most people get into debts because they want something that their neighbor has, maybe it's a car or designer clothes or something else. They would not have gotten into debt if they had not coveted it. Another commandment of God is to honor one's father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Do you

know how many people are in prison today while others have been in terrible and severe situations, some murdered just because they chose not to obey their parents?

Another commandment is to observe the Sabbath as a rest day (Exodus 20:8-11). Some people work 16-20, seven days a week to get rich. The same people experience minimal results despite their grievous work. If they kept the Sabbath and acknowledged that God has the power to make them wealthy (Deuteronomy 8:18) and not their efforts, they would be prosperous financially. If they took that time to rest, they would be refreshed with new energy for the incoming week.

“It is in obedience to the law of God that the spire of grain bursts through the ground, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Mark 4:28. These the Lord develops in their proper season because they do not resist His working.” – Christ Object Lessons, Page 82, Ellen G. White.

God has planted a seed in you and has set forth laws for that seed to grow the same way He has set out regulations for the growth of all plants. Follow those laws.

“God created the seed, as He created the earth, by His word. By His word He gave it power to grow and multiply. He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so. . . : And God saw that it was good." Gen. 1:11, 12. It is that word which still causes the seed to grow. Every seed that sends up its green blade to the sunlight declares the wonder-working power of that word uttered by Him who "spake, and it was"; who "commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:9.” – Christ Object Lessons, Page 81, Ellen G. White.

Psalm 126:5-6 (KJV) - "[5] They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. [6] He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

God bless you!

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for putting precious seeds inside me. Please help me to use them effectively for your glory and for the blessing of your people. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Write down all the gifts, talents, and skills that you possess.
- Write down all the resources that you have.
- Prayerfully ask God how you can use the above to glorify Him.
- Brainstorm some of the methods you have come up with on using them.
- Write down an organized plan with specific actions for using them.
- Implement: Start immediately.

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CHAPTER 24

THE ULTIMATE PROTECTION

I fear nothing, I'm under the Almighty's shadow,

My Father God has placed me in His divine cradle,

I fear no drought, no famine, no earthquake, no tornado,

Nothing scares me, whether in Nairobi or Colorado.

Truth is my shield and ultimate buckler,

Driving me in the right direction, the perfect rider,

It repairs my life, the ultimate chuckler,

Truth sets me free from the ferocious attacker.

Truth is light; Truth is luculent,

Truth is sweet; Truth is succulent,

Truth shields even from the worst ailment,

Truth heals; Truth is the best supplement.

God is my refuge, God is my fortress,

In Him, I find luxury comfort than a Saatva Mattress,

God shields me from poverty and puts me in the best place,

God will make me pure; God will make me flawless.

Psalm 91:4 (KJV) – “He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

Definition of **shield** – A person or thing providing protection.

Definition of **buckler -** a small round shield held by a handle or worn on the forearm.

"His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." A shield and a buckler are both used for protection. The words shield and buckler have been used together to emphasize how powerful God's protection is. Some people may decide to use a shield while others may decide to use a buckler. However, those who decide to use them both have more protection than those who only use one.

To clarify this, a house with a wooden door only is not well protected like a house that has both a wooden and a metal door. God’s truth acts like that wooden and metal door combined together. It acts like both the shield and buckler. God's truth (not someone else's) is meant to safeguard you. Everything written in the Bible is meant to protect you. Therefore, you need to use God's Word for ultimate fortification when the enemy comes to attack you.

For you to use God’s Word effectively for your protection you must know it. Therefore, strive to know the Word of God. Proverbs 9:10 (KJV) – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

The best way to know God is through His Word. Knowledge of God's Word, which results in a knowledge of God, sharpens and deepens your understanding. John 17:3 (KJV) – “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Knowledge of God is eternal life.

“A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation. It is this alone that can make us like God in character.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 409.2, Ellen G. White.

The Word of God shields us from sinning. In Matthew 4, when the Devil came to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus used the Word of God as His ultimate defense by answering the Devil, "It is written" in all three temptations. Jesus knew the Word of God and as a result, He was able to resist the Devil, and as the Bible promises in James 4:7, the Devil fled from Him.

God wants to give us full protection. Why? When an enemy confronts you on the head in a physical battle and you have shielded your chest, the shield will be of no use. When he attacks your legs, and you have covered your hands only, the covering will be useless. That is why Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armour of God."

All components in the armour of God work together to enable you to defend yourself against the enemy. All elements in that armour need each other in order to work effectively. Therefore, if you want the truth to shield you fully you need to apply it fully, not partially.

"Man is contending with foes who are stronger than he. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places." Ephesians 6:12. It is impossible for us in our own strength to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow. The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 717.1, Ellen G. White.

You need to believe that the Bible is true from Genesis to Revelation and apply everything written in it. When you apply it partially, you leave some areas of your life endangered. When your body is not fully shielded in battle, some parts of your body can get injured, therefore causing the whole body to be in pain and unable to properly function.

The same applies to your life. You can get injured in those areas of your life where you have not applied truth. If you use the truth to govern your finances and fail to use the truth to govern your health, your finances will thrive, but your health will be deprived. Another example is when you refrain from stealing and fail to keep the Sabbath, you will get the blessing of not stealing but miss out on the blessing of the Sabbath.

Which commandments of God are we supposed to obey for our lives to be fully blessed?

Deuteronomy 28:1 – "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:" The keyword in this verse is all, not missing out on any. God wants us to observe all His commandments because He

wants to set us on high above all nations of the world. God wants us to access all the blessings that He has in store for us.

Deuteronomy 8:1 (KJV) – "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers." The commandments given to us by God are for our good. They are meant for our prosperity.

Isaiah 48:17-18 (AMP) – "[17] This is what the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says, "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit (benefit), Who leads you in the way that you should go. [18] "Oh, that you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your peace *and* prosperity would have been like a [flowing] river, And your righteousness [the holiness and purity of the nation] like the [abundant] waves of the sea."

Few people in the world and even in the Christian community are willing to obey God 100%, which explains why few people in the world are fully blessed. Many enjoy partial obedience because full obedience is not convenient for them. James 2:10 (KJV) – "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He is guilty of all because he gives the Devil a loophole to enter, and once the Devil enters, he corrupts the whole being.

The Devil doesn't want a large space to enter and take charge of someone's life. He needs a very small space. Galatians 5:9 (AMPC) – **"**A little leaven (a slight inclination to error, or a few false teachers) leavens the whole lump [it perverts the whole conception of faith or misleads the whole church]." Once you give the devil room to attack you through one sin, you end up committing other sins.

Sin builds up. One sin usually leads to another sin. In the story of King David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), David looked at Bathsheba first and lusted after her. Afterward, he devised a scheme to murder her husband, Uriah. Then he went ahead and killed Uriah and took his wife, Bathsheba.

Commenting on the story of David and Bathsheba, Ellen G. White writes in her book Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 717.2, "The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle. It begins in apparently small things—the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world."

Usually, when a part of your body is sick, your whole body ends up feeling uncomfortable. Your peace of mind is deprived. Your whole body feels weak because one part is aching. Sin works similarly. One sin can discompose your whole life. It tampers your every faculty and befuddles every part of your life. The longer sin stays in your life, the scruffier your life gets. Your spiritual life, social life, health, and finances get messed up.

For example, you may use your entire working time on social media instead of working. Sometimes at the workplace, you fill in that you are present while you are absent. Your boss may not know, but God is watching. Such behaviors will cause your productivity at work to get lower, and you may eventually lose your job.

Once you have lost your job, you begin losing friends, and instability in your family arises because you can't provide. This condition leads to stress which may lead to more serious mental health issues like depression which may turn to ulcers, and as a result, your physical health gets impaired. This leads to confusion and desperation, so you start engaging in evil deeds to provide for your family. The cycle goes from bad to worse. If you had kept God's truth as your shield and buckler, all this would not have happened. Most of the bad things in an individual's life can be avoided if he allows God's truth to govern his life.

Psalm 91:9-11 (KJV) – "[9] Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; [10] There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. [11] For he shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

We need to make God our refuge. We need to dwell in the secret place of the Most High. When God is our refuge, our safety is assured. Nothing can happen to us because we are under the cover of the almighty. We are under the shadow of the most powerful being in the universe.

In Job 1:8, God asked Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" The key phrase is *my servant*. Job was God's servant, not anyone else's servant. The Devil answered by saying, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land (Job 1:10, KJV)." The Devil was saying that because God had provided a covering of protection for Job, no one could touch him. Why? Because Job had kept God as his ultimate protection. He depended upon God's Word always.

Job probably realized that he could neither protect nor bless himself. As much as he worked, he acknowledged that the results he got were not from his efforts but from God. Satan acknowledged that, too, when he said in Job 1:10 (KJV) – "Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." We need to realize that without Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15:5). We need to acknowledge that we depend on God for everything because He created us and from Him flows the breath of life (Genesis 2:7).

“The first lesson to be taught ... is the lesson of dependence upon God.... As a flower of the field has its root in the soil; as it must receive air, dew, showers, and sunshine, so must we receive from God that which ministers to the life of the soul.” – Testimonies For The Church 7:194, Ellen G. White.

"The presence of God is guaranteed to the Christian. This Rock of faith is the living presence of God. The weakest may depend upon it. Those who think themselves the strongest may become the weakest unless they depend on Christ as their efficiency, their worthiness. This is the Rock upon which we may build successfully. God is near in Christ's atoning sacrifice, in His intercession, His loving, tender ruling power over the church. Seated by the eternal throne, He watches them with intense interest. As long as the members of the church shall through faith draw sap and nourishment from Jesus Christ, and not from man's opinions and devisings, and methods; if having a conviction of the nearness of God in Christ, they put their entire trust in Him, they will have a vital connection with Christ as the branch has connection with the parent stock. The church is established not on theories of men, on long-drawn-out plans and forms. It depends upon Christ their righteousness. It is built on faith in Christ, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." – Sons and Daughters of God, Page 77.3, Ellen G. White.

"The strength of every soul is in God and not in man. Quietness and confidence is to be the strength of all who give their hearts to God. Christ has not a casual interest in us but an interest stronger than a mother for her child.... Our Saviour has purchased us by human suffering and sorrow, by insult, reproach, abuse, mockery, rejection, and death. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. He will make you secure under His protection.... Our weakness in human nature will not bar our access to the heavenly Father, for He [Christ] died to make intercession for us." - Our Father Cares, Page 20, Ellen G. White.

John 15:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Luke 24:45 (AMP) – "Then He opened their minds to [help them] understand the Scriptures."

Make God's Word your shield and buckler. Ask God to open your mind to help you understand it. Have faith in God. Faith in God is the ultimate protection.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, protect me from all the wiles of evil. Forgive me for all the sins that I have committed, the ones my family has done, and even the ones my forefathers did. Keep me away from sin and give me the strength to overcome temptation. Please put a hedge around me and cover my life, health, finances, family, and friends. If there are any loopholes, I ask you to refill them. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List all your family members and relatives. Fast and pray for them.
2. List all your possessions. Fast and pray for them.
3. List the sins that you are struggling with. Fast and pray to overcome them.
4. If you have any illness, fast and pray for it. Pray also for other people who are sick.

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CHAPTER 25

DO YOU WANT PERFECT HEALTH?

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Do you want perfect health, my friend?

It's a gift that knows no end,

In faith and obedience, we find the way,

To cherish each moment, come what may.

Have faith in God, and He will heal you,

In His loving arms, He'll see you through,

With every ailment, trial, and strife,

He's the source of hope, the essence of life.

Sickness was brought by sin, it's true,

Yet there's hope in God, for me and you,

With every ailment, every pain, The promise of healing remains.

Faith brings healing, In God's loving arms, we stay the course,

In times of trouble, and pain we bear, Faith is the answer, it's always there.

Exodus 15:25-26 (KJ21) - “"[25] And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them, [26] and said, 'If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.'"

Spirituality Affects Health

Sickness came as a result of sin. If Adam and Eve didn’t sin, there would be no disease. God is telling us that if we obey Him, we shall have perfect health. He puts a lot of emphasis on obedience in this verse as a result of good health because health is extremely important to Him. First, He says, "If thou wilt diligently hearken," the keyword is 'diligently.' You need to be exceedingly attentive to the voice of God, always having His commandments in your heart; that is why Psalm 1:1-2 says, "and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

Secondly, Exodus 15:26 says, "and do that which is right in His sight." The word ‘His’ is the keyword. Many things seem right to us but are not right in His sight, i.e., observance of the 'any day' Sabbath instead of the Seventh-day Sabbath, among other unbiblical religious practices. Also, we should emphasize the word 'do.' Some people know the truth but won't do it. Knowing is not enough.

Thirdly, He says, 'and wilt give ear to His commandments. This phrase is the third emphasis on obedience to God in this verse. Notice the words, 'His commandments.' Not anyone else's commandments but God's commandments. Matthew 15:9 (KJV) - "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." Doctrines such as 'we don't need to keep the commandments anymore" are formulated by men, not God.

God is clear in Matthew 5:19 (KJV) - "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." The same people who preach against the commandments will be angry if you steal from them or do any form of injustice to them. If the commandments were irrelevant, they should allow everyone to harm them.

There is a popular doctrine that many Christians like that says, "The commandments are not relevant to New Testament believers, and they are no longer binding after the cross." John wrote the book of Revelation 70-80 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Revelation 22:14 (KJV)- "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Fourth He says, "and keep all His statutes ."The keyword is all. The Bible (New Testament) says in James 2:10 (KJV), "Whosoever therefore shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he shall be guilty of all." Why should we keep all of them? Exodus 20 (the chapter of the commandments) says in verse 1, "And God spake all these words saying." Exodus 20:3-17 (the first to the last commandment) is written directly from God in direct speech and active voice. Moses could not even paraphrase it because of its holiness. We should keep all of them because God spoke all of them.

Obedience to God will result in tremendous health and wealth. God has emphasized obedience to His commandments four times in this verse but using different wordings. One of the reasons He has made such a strong emphasis is because He wants to clarify the importance of obedience, and He wants you and me to have perfect health.

“A Factor in Dealing With Disease—The power of the will is not valued as it should be. Let the will be kept awake and rightly directed, and it will impart energy to the whole being and will be a wonderful aid in the maintenance of health. It is a power also in dealing with disease.” - Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 690.1, Ellen G. White.

“By the exercise of the willpower in placing themselves in right relation to life, patients can do much to cooperate with the physician's efforts for their recovery. There are thousands who can recover health if they will. The Lord does not want them to be sick. He desires them to be well and happy, and they should make up their minds to be well.” - Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 690.2, Ellen G. White.

The will is what guides our decisions to do right or wrong. God has made truth available to everyone. At the same time, He has given every human being free will to choose what’s right and wrong. Choices always have results. They either result in noble rewards or severe consequences.

A will that is wrongly directed leads to the wrong results. Many harm their health through the choices they make.

For example, Jesus tells us not to worry (Matthew 6:31). Some know this but choose to worry instead of putting their trust in God; therefore, they bring mental health issues upon themselves. The Bible says in Psalm 1:2 that blessed is the man who always has God's word in his mind. Many cause damage to their minds by thinking evil. This evil, if done, continually causes poor health since every part of the body is controlled by the mind. The Bible should be the ultimate guide in all your major or minor choices. Your decision-making should be solely dependent upon the Bible.

Various people don't base their decisions on the Bible because they think it doesn't have everything they need to know. Some think the Bible is only relevant for spiritual development and not relevant to practical life. This is not true. The Bible may not have detailed knowledge of everything, but it is the foundation of all good knowledge/Truth. Every good and fruitful knowledge today has its roots in the Bible.

For example, the parable of the man who built his house on a rock and the one who built his house on sand (Matthew 7:24-27) outlays an engineering principle. Before tertiary studies on civil engineering were invented, this truth had been written in the Bible thousands of years before. The parable of the sower (Matthew 13) outlines an agricultural principle that for seeds to grow and flourish, they need to be planted in good soil.

Newton's third law of motion in Physics, which states that for each and every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, has its roots in the Bible. Romans 6:23 (KJV) – "For the wages of sin is death" this verse shows the results (equal and opposite reaction) you will encounter if you choose to sin (action).

The programming logic of 'IF-THEN ELSE' applied in Information Technology for developing software, websites, mobile apps, games, etc., has its roots in the Bible. For example, God told Adam and Eve **if** they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, **then** they would surely die **else** they would live (Genesis 2:16-17).

Deuteronomy 28 lists the blessings and curses of obedience and disobedience and uses the computer programming principle of IF THEN ELSE. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 gives a condition that **if** one obeys God, **then** they will encounter the blessings listed. Verse 15 to 68 lists the curses that

will result in those who choose not to obey God **(else).** All good knowledge in every field of study in this world has its foundation in the Bible. The Bible is more accurate than the best scientific calculator or supercomputer.

In university, there used to be a common practice of students not going to school on the first day because the first day was for introductions only, and to many of us, introduction was not important. One day as I was trying to decide whether to go to school on the first day, God led me to Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Since God started in the beginning and I am created in His image (Genesis 1:27), I should have the habit of starting things from the beginning. I read Genesis 1:5, which says, "And the evening and the morning were the first day." Therefore, if God started His work on the first day, who am I not to go to school on the first day? And so I realized that to be excellent, one should pay attention to small things.

Ecclesiasticus (KJVAAE) 19:1 says, "He that contemneth small things shall fall little by little." The minor action of going to school on the first day got me opportunities that I would not have gotten if I had gone on the other days. I also realized that school is not just about the academics that you learn in class but the whole physical environment, and there is a reason why God has placed you in that physical environment. The Bible should not only guide you on major decisions, but it should also guide you on minor decisions.

“Improved Health Promised—Evil habits and practices are bringing upon men disease of every kind. Let the understanding be convinced by education as to the sinfulness of abusing and degrading the powers that God has given. Let the mind become intelligent and the will be placed on the Lord's side, and there will be a wonderful improvement in the physical health.” - Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 690.4, Ellen G. White.

How Can We Accomplish This?

“But this can never be accomplished in mere human strength. With strenuous efforts through the grace of Christ to renounce all evil practices and associations and to observe temperance in all things, there must be an abiding persuasion that repentance for the past, as well as forgiveness, is to be sought of God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. These things must be brought into daily experience; there must be strict watchfulness and unwearied entreaty that Christ will bring

every thought into captivity to Himself; His renovating power must be given to the soul, that as accountable beings we may present to God our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him, which is our reasonable service." — Medical Missionary, November-December 1892, Ellen G. White.

"The first health rule is confess your sins" – Pastor Randy Skeete.

May God give you the grace to obey Him because it is the key to perfect health. Trust in God because He is the master healer. If you are sick, may God heal you in the Mighty name of Jesus. The name above every other name of things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth. The name by which at its mention every knee shall bow.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we reflect on Exodus 15:26, we understand the profound connection between our spiritual obedience and physical health. Grant us the wisdom to discern what is right in Your sight, emphasizing not only knowing Your truth but also doing it. May we give ear to Your commandments, upholding all Your statutes, recognizing their holiness. We understand that obeying Your commandments is the key to perfect health and abundant life. We seek Your forgiveness for our sins, acknowledging our need for Your grace and the power of Christ to transform our lives. Help us to renounce all evil practices, observe temperance, and present our bodies as a living sacrifice. We lift those suffering from illness, praying for Your healing touch in the name of Jesus. Grant us the strength to walk in obedience, understanding it's the key to perfect health, and may our trust in You remain unwavering. We thank You for being the master healer. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

One faith-filled activity for readers who have absorbed the message in the above essay is to engage in a 21-day "Faith and Health Challenge

1. Commit to 21 days of focused effort: Dedicate the next three weeks to deepening your faith, improving your health, and aligning your choices with the principles shared in the essay.
2. Daily Scripture Meditation: Choose a relevant Bible verse daily that emphasizes the connection between faith, obedience, and health. Reflect on its meaning and how it can guide your decisions.
3. Daily Prayer: Start and end each day with a prayer. Thank God for His guidance and healing power, and ask for the strength to make choices that honor Him.
4. Journal Your Journey: Maintain a journal throughout the 21 days to record your thoughts, reflections, and experiences. Document your challenges, victories, and how you feel physically and spiritually.
5. Healthy Choices: Make conscious, health-focused choices during these 21 days. This can include eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and practicing stress-reduction techniques like meditation or prayer.
6. Seek Accountability: Share your commitment with a friend or family member and invite them to join the challenge. Encourage each other and discuss your experiences daily.
7. Reflect and Adjust: Regularly review your journal entries to evaluate your progress. Adjust your habits and decisions based on the insights you gain and the guidance you receive through your faith.
8. Acts of Kindness: Incorporate acts of kindness and service into your daily routine. This could be helping others, volunteering, or simply offering a word of encouragement to someone in need.
9. Share Your Journey: After the 21 days, consider sharing your experiences and insights with others, either in your community or through social media, to inspire and encourage them to embark on their own faith and health journey.

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CHAPTER 26

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

Righteousness is inherited from the Greatest Possessor,

Righteousness is processed in you, by the Greatest Processor,

Righteousness is taught by the Greatest Professor,

God, the author of righteousness, esteems you highly, no lesser.

By faith, Noah became an heir of righteousness,

He did what God told him, yielding in faithful obedience,

Righteousness by faith leads one to true greatness,

True greatness is gotten from obedience to God with diligence.

Good actions without Jesus are like a disconnected wire,

Good actions without Jesus are like flames without fire,

Good actions without Jesus are like rims without a tire,

But good actions with Jesus is faith filled with blazing fire.

Yield to Jesus Christ for He joins the dots,

Making you complete, tying all the knots,

Making you clean from inside out, filling you with righteous thoughts,

In His ship you cannot sink, get out of other boats.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJ21) - "By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Introduction

Noah became an heir of righteousness. Becoming an heir to righteousness means that you have received righteousness as an inheritance. What is the meaning of inheritance? Inheritance means possessing belongings from someone else. With this meaning, we can see that Noah did not make himself righteous. God made him righteous. Noah did not give himself righteousness. God gave him righteousness.

God's character is righteous. God's law is righteous. What does righteousness mean? Righteousness means being in a right relationship with God and having the same character as God. It is living in a morally upright way. It is the exact opposite of sin. It is the exact opposite of evil. It is living in conformity with God's Word or God's Commandments.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, God had created them as righteous human beings. God looked at everything He had created (including people), and it was very good (Genesis 1:31). Adam and Eve had done nothing for God to create them as perfect human beings. It was a gift from God. However, if they wanted to maintain that state of perfection, they had to live in conformity with God's Word.

After the first pair sinned, they tried to make themselves righteous by covering themselves with aprons of leaves (Genesis 3:7). God took away those aprons of leaves and covered them with coats of skin. In other words, what they had covered themselves with was not good enough.

Our own righteousness is not good enough. Not only is it not good enough, but it is wicked. Man's righteousness is wickedness. God's righteousness is true righteousness. The Bible tells us in Matthew 6:33 (KJ21) - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Notice the wording, "His righteousness," not our righteousness.

"Stop it, don't do that." These were the words my friend Kenneth told me when I was tempted to sign in present a day that I was absent from the Mechatronics Knowledge for Mechanical Engineers Class. The professor had given me the class register to write my name and sign. It was

a piece of paper. At the back of that piece of paper was the attendance for the previous classes. He had designed it in such a way where one could easily add their names and pretend they were present.

I knew what I wanted to do was wrong but the temptation inside me to appear perfect seemed stronger. I wanted to make it look like I have not missed a single class while I had missed that one class. When Kenneth stopped me, I realized that it is God's voice and I told him, "God has used you." So, I stopped. That is how self-righteousness looks like. Self-righteousness is sin. I was trying to appear perfect, therefore, I wanted to use a sinful method to appear flawless.

When we seek our own righteousness, we end up sinning because there is nothing righteous in our character. After Adam and Eve fell, we all inherited a sinful nature. When we seek God's righteousness, God makes us truly righteous because God is the author of true righteousness. In the garden of Eden, God had to sacrifice an animal to cover Adam and Eve with coats of skin.

What Adam and Eve had covered themselves in (aprons of leaves) was not good enough because they ran and hid from the presence of God when they heard God walking in the garden (Genesis 3:8-10). Fear automatically comes to the heart of the one who is doing something that is against God's commandments. Sin makes you avoid people. Sin makes you avoid God. Your righteousness will make you avoid God just as sin will make you avoid God.

Innocently, some people have joined churches or religious organizations that have made them seclude themselves from others. Some have followed or misunderstood doctrines that have led them to isolation. They do this unknowingly while thinking falsely that they are becoming better. The Spirit of God unites for it is the Spirit of unity (Psalm 133:1).

The sinner always runs away from God and never towards God. When one clothes themselves with their own righteousness, they will always keep a distance from God. When God clothes you with His righteousness, you will move towards Him.

John 3:16 (KJ21) - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God sacrificed an animal in the garden of Eden and thus instituted the sacrificial system for the remission of sins. He was pleased with Abel's sacrifice because Abel obeyed His command. Cain brought God fruit from the ground as an offering (Genesis 4:3). He was a tiller of the ground;

therefore, he brought to God what he had. However, what he had was not good enough because it was not in accordance with God's Word.

God wanted an animal sacrifice, not a fruit offering because He introduced that system immediately after Adam and Eve sinned. The fruit that Cain presented to God was meant for him (human beings) to eat (Genesis 1:29). At that time, God had not yet allowed human beings to eat meat. How can you bring to a holy God food that is meant to be at your table? The Bible says in Genesis 4:5 that God did not have respect for Cain and his offering. God despised Cain because Cain despised Him.

Cain thought that God would accept anything he brought as long as it was an offering. His action showed that he did not regard the lofty standards of God. Therefore, he felt that God would be pleased when he brought him anything as long as he brought something. The act of righteousness that Cain did was his own righteousness, not God's righteousness.

This can be likened to the story of Ananiah and Sapphira who died on the spot. They did not refuse to bring God something. They brought anything. God does not want you to take anything to Him. He wants you to take to Him the right thing. Abel brought the best of his flock (Genesis 4:4) and God had respect for that offering because Abel showed great respect for Him. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:4 that through that act of faith, Abel obtained a witness from God that he was righteous. God declared Abel righteous because he did exactly as God wanted.

Having started the sacrificial system, God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the ultimate sacrifice on the cross for our sins. God the Father gave us Jesus, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish. Through the blood of Jesus, God has made us righteous.

Romans 6:23 (KJ21) - "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The reward of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life. This gift God has given us by grace because we do not deserve it. God chose to pardon Adam and Eve and by extension us because of His divine love. They were doomed for judgment, but He had mercy on them. We are doomed for judgment as well, but He always shows mercy and grace to us.

Acts 13:38-39 (KJ21) - "[38] Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; [39] And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is preached. For God to hear your prayers, you must pray in the name of Jesus. Your sins cannot be forgiven, without the intervention of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our High Priest, and He intercedes for us. Some of the people who came to receive healing from Jesus did not ask to be healed directly. Instead, they asked Christ to have mercy on them. Jesus showed them mercy by healing them. God's mercy has miraculous results even in our physical lives.

Through Jesus, all who believe that He has the power to forgive sins and to cleanse one from unrighteousness are justified. Various times in the Bible, Jesus would ask people if they believed that He could perform the miracle (Matthew 9:28-29, Mark 9:23, John 11:26). When the person showed belief in their response, Christ would go ahead and heal them.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. (Mark 9:24, KJ21).'" The father of the child had faith in God, but he harbored a little doubt in his heart as is common with many Christ's followers and seekers. However, he did not depend on himself to erase the portion of doubt that he had, he depended on God to erase it.

After expressing his dependence on God, Jesus responded by rebuking the unclean spirit. The miracle that followed was the child's healing, as the spirit left him, and he was restored to health. This event demonstrates Jesus' power over evil and his willingness to help those who have faith, even if it is weak. God does not expect you to be strong. He knows you are weak. All He expects is for you to be dependent on Him in all that you do, even the little things.

I have taught dependence on God for a long time, but it was until recently when I started studying about righteousness by faith that I got a deeper revelation concerning dependence on God. Last night as I was typing this, the revelation got deeper.

Before typing this, God woke me up. I slept late at around 2 am and I needed to be up early so that I could type this and do some other work. I knew by my own power, I could not. I set an alarm, but the alarm didn't help much (often it doesn't). However, before I went to sleep, I said an earnest prayer to God asking Him to wake me up early.

Early in the morning, I heard a hand tapping my bed, next to where I slept. I knew it was God, and I woke up but because the sleep was heavy, I went back to sleep. I heard someone tapping my bed again. I said as much as the sleep is sweet, I cannot disobey. I woke up and knelt beside my bed to pray while still feeling sleepy. I doubted if I would be able to complete the prayer. By the time I had finished praying, I was fully awake. No request is too small to present to God.

We cannot depend on Jesus if we do not believe in Him or if we partially believe in Him. We ought to fully believe in Him. A complete surrender to God is necessary for us to receive God's complete help. If we are not able to do that, we should ask for divine aid from God to enable us to do that.

The first step in believing in Jesus is to make a conscious decision to go to Him. Like the prodigal son's father, God will come running to us when we are still far on the way (Luke 15:20). Therefore, those who decide to go to God, God justifies them as unholy as they are and imputes His righteousness on them. Thus, making them righteous as He is. If they were to die on the spot, they would inherit eternal life when Christ comes back the second time. If they were to continue living, Jesus would do a special and noble work of sanctification in them to make their characters righteous.

The thief on the cross did not have much time to live but his last words to Jesus were, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom (Luke 23:42, KJ21)." Jesus saved him on the spot and promised him that he would inherit eternal life (Luke 23:43). The father ran to the prodigal son before the son came to where he was. He took away his tattered clothes and gave him new clothes. If you have drifted from God, like the prodigal son, go back to Him and He will restore you.

The End of the Law?

Romans 10:4 (KJ21) - "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

The New International Version says that Christ is the culmination of the law.

Through Jesus Christ, the purpose of the law is realized. Romans 10:4 confirms that righteousness is accessible to everyone who believes. Faith in Jesus offers a direct relationship with God and forgiveness of sins.

Is believing just a feeling?

“The faith in Christ which saves the soul is not what it is represented to be by many. “Believe, believe,” is their cry; “only believe in Christ, and you will be saved. It is all you have to do.” While true faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation, it will lead to perfect conformity to the law of God.” – The Faith I Live By, Page 93.3, Ellen G. White.

“Faith is not an opiate, but a stimulant. Looking to Calvary will not quiet your soul into nonperformance of duty, but will create faith that will work, purifying the soul from all selfishness.” - The Review and Herald, January 24, 1893, Ellen G. White.

In Romans 10:4, the word translated as "end" in "Christ is the end of the law" comes from the Greek word "telos" (τέλος). In the original language, "telos" can mean:

End/Goal: It indicates something that has reached its intended purpose, goal, or final point.

Completion/Fulfillment: It signifies something that has been brought to its completion or fulfillment.

In the context of Romans 10:4, "telos" means that Christ is the fulfillment, completion, or purpose of the law. The law points to Christ, and through Him, the requirement of the law for righteousness is fulfilled. Thus, faith in Jesus makes believers righteous, not by adhering to the Mosaic law.

When the Bible uses the phrase “the end of the law” in Romans 10:4, it does not mean the destruction of the law. Instead, it means the fulfillment of the law. We see more light has been shed on the word fulfillment in Matthew 5:17. Matthew 5:17 (KJV) says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

In Matthew 5:17, the word translated as "fulfill" comes from the Greek word "plēroō" (πληρόω). Here’s what it means in the original language:

To Make Full or Complete: "Plēroō" means to fill up, complete, or bring to fullness. It carries the idea of bringing something to its intended purpose or making it fully effective.

To Accomplish: In the context of Matthew 5:17, "plēroō" means to accomplish or bring to realization. Jesus is saying that He has come to fulfill the law and the prophets, meaning that He is bringing their true meaning and purpose to completion.

In Matthew 5:17 ("Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill"), Jesus explains that He did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to complete or accomplish (carry out) their purpose. This fulfillment involves both the embodiment of the law's requirements and the realization of the prophecies about the Messiah.

“The God of heaven has placed a benediction upon them that keep the commandments of God. Shall we stand as a peculiar people of God, or shall we trample upon the law of God and say it is not binding? God might just as well have abolished Himself.” - SDA Bible Commentary, 1:1104, Ellen G. White.

We have seen that Christ did not come to abolish the law. This means that the law is still binding. Not only is it binding but Jesus has made it fully effective as we can see from the meaning of the Greek word plēroō. Jesus came to fill up, complete and bring fullness to the law. The law is not complete without Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Word (John 1:1, John 1:14) and Jesus is the law because the law is the Word. Before Jesus came, the teachers of the law were teaching strict adherence to the law. They were doing the right thing because we need to obey God’s Word, without turning to the right or to the left. The major mistake they did is that they opposed Jesus, the author of the law. This means that the law they taught was incomplete because it was void of Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 (KJ21) - "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is at the center of the law. We are dependent on the power of Christ to obey each commandment of God. Jesus is a rewarder to those who keep His law. Therefore, you cannot keep the Sabbath without believing in Jesus because Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath.

Christ came to make the law effective. He came to accomplish the law. He came to bring it to full realization. We see evidence of this in the following verse after Matthew 5:17, which is Matthew 5:18.

Matthew 5:18 (KJ21) - "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Here is more evidence that shows that nothing in God's law has changed.

To make Matthew 5:18 more vivid, let us look at the meaning of the various original words in their original written Greek language:

Jot" (Greek: ἰῶτα, iota) - The smallest letter in the Greek alphabet (equivalent to the Hebrew yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet). This symbolizes even the smallest part of the Law.

"Tittle" (Greek: κεραία, keraia) - A small stroke or mark used to distinguish between letters (similar to a small accent or stroke that differentiates one letter from another). This refers to even the tiniest detail of the Law.

"Pass" (Greek: παρέρχομαι, parerchomai) - To go away, disappear, or come to an end. Jesus is saying that not even the smallest part of the Law will pass away until everything is accomplished.

"Fulfilled" (Greek: γίνομαι, ginomai) - To become, happen, or come to pass. In this context, it refers to all that is prophesied or promised in the Law being completed or accomplished.

When we look at the Greek words, we can see how serious that verse is. Jesus says that one jot (the smallest letter in the Hebrew Alphabet) and one tittle (a small mark on a letter) will in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

The original Greek word used in Matthew 5:17 and the one used in Matthew 5:18 for fulfilled are different. In Matthew 5:17, "plēroō" is used. This word means to make full, to complete, or to accomplish. In Matthew 5:18, "ginoma" is used. This word means to become, to happen, or to come to pass. In this context, it refers to the fulfillment or realization of all that is promised or predicted in the Law. This means that God's plans and promises must all come to fruition before any change occurs in the law.

One of the greatest promises that God gives to those who obey the law is the promise of eternal life (Revelation 22:14). Until that promise of eternal life is ended then the law will end. The question is, when will that eternal life end? The answer is simple: never. Eternal life will never end, meaning God's law will never end.

Matthew 5:19 (KJ21) - "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus warns against those who break His commandments and influence others to do the same. He says that such kinds of people will be regarded as the least. The more sins one does and the greater the scope of sinful influence one has, the lesser they will be esteemed. On the other hand, the more one acts in righteousness, the more they will be uplifted. The greater the influence of righteousness one has, the more they will be esteemed. This is further evidence that Christ's fulfillment of the law does not mean the end of the law.

Matthew 5:20 (KJ21) - "For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

In Matthew 5:20, Jesus told His followers that unless their righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, they will in no case enter the kingdom of God. Who were the scribes and Pharisees? They were experts of the law. Their righteousness should pass the level of that of the scribes and pharisees for them to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20, shows that Christ's standard of obeying the law was higher than the "high" standards that the Pharisees used to teach of obeying the law. What Jesus expects of us is greater than what the highest bishop, pastor or Bible teacher expects of us.

The Pharisees' standards were low even though they thought they were high because the law they taught was opposed to Jesus, the Creator of everything including the law. It is like using a machine that you do not know how to use without reading the manufacturer's manual. When you read the manufacturer's manual, using it becomes seamless. If you don't, you will waste a lot of time on guess work, trial and error.

In Matthew 5:20, we also see that the fulfillment of the law that Jesus Christ came to do was to uplift the law to a higher standard than it was taught. A standard higher than heaven is from earth. God's standards are infinitely higher when compared to ours.

In the subsequent verses in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents those high standards:

Matthew 5:21-22 (KJV) - "[21] Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: [22] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus explains that murder goes beyond physical murder. It can mean spiritual, emotional or mental murder. People understood murder as physical killing, but Christ tells them insulting and discouraging people is also murder.

Matthew 5:23-24 (KJV) - "[23] Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus commands believers to resolve any conflicts they have with their brethren before they go to worship God. It is quite common to see people in church hating each other but are busy doing all the religious rituals. Jesus Christ condemned them because He expects believers who go to worship a holy and pure God to go with a clean heart.

Matthew 5:27-28 (KJV) - "[27] Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: [28] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus brings His followers from the understanding of adultery in physical action to where it first begins, the mind. In the same sermon, in Matthew 5:8, Jesus encourages people to have a pure mind. A person who has an impure mind with noble-looking physical actions is not righteous and is not fit for God's kingdom. The people who caught the woman in adultery, caught her committing physical adultery. If she had silently committed adultery in her mind, there would be no way of catching her since there would be no evidence.

People can praise and reward you because of doing something good. The reverse is also true: People can punish you for doing something wrong in society. However, no human being can punish you because of thinking the wrong thing as they do not have the ability to read minds. God can read minds. He expects our clean actions to be accompanied by a clean mind.

God is the ultimate judge and the only one who can accurately judge. The earthly courts judge based on physical evidence. Christ's judgment goes beyond physical evidence. His judgment is fair because it goes beyond a created being's ability. The Creator who has the power to read our thoughts brings us to a higher standard by expecting us to be righteous right from our thoughts.

In other verses in Matthew 5, Christ shows us higher standards for righteousness. For example:

- In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus gives them a higher standard against divorce than Moses had given them.
- In Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus gives them a higher standard for oaths, telling them not to swear at all (Matthew 5:34)
- In Matthew 5:38-40, Jesus gave them a higher standard against retaliation, contrary to what they had been taught, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Matthew 5:38).
- Jesus teaches people to go the extra mile in Matthew 5:41. He tells us to go beyond what we have been told to do.
- In Matthew 5:42, Jesus Christ tells us to cultivate the spirit and the culture of giving.
- In Matthew 5:43-45, Jesus taught on loving one's enemies, contrary to what they were taught to only love their neighbors.
- In Matthew 5:46-47, Jesus taught about kindness to everyone, including strangers. He taught that we should reach out to those whom we don't know, not just those whom we are familiar with.
- In Matthew 5:48, Jesus completes the chapter by telling us to be as perfect as God the Father is perfect. Jesus was perfect even when He was in this world, He committed no sin. However, He lived with sinners because He was in this world. He was in direct physical contact with the sinful world.

Therefore, Jesus saw Himself unworthy to tell us to look at Him as an example for He carried the sins of the world (that were not His). Thus, He points us to God the Father, One who has not touched sin and One who dwells in the highest heavens. He tells us to be perfect as God the Father is. In other words, those listening to Him at that time should go beyond the perfection of Jesus (when He was in this world) and reach the perfection of God the Father. That is humanly impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

The Law Our Guardian

Galatians 3:24 (AMP) - “With the result that the Law has become our tutor and our disciplinarian to guide us to Christ, so that we may be justified [that is, declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing with God] by faith.”

The law is like our guardian. It guards us and guides us to Christ.

In Galatians 3:24, the word translated as "tutor" or "schoolmaster" is the Greek word "paidagōgos" (παιδαγωγός).

In ancient Greek and Roman culture, a paidagōgos was typically a servant or slave who was responsible for supervising and guiding a child, especially in their education. This person was not necessarily a teacher in the modern sense, but more of a caregiver who ensured that the child behaved properly and arrived safely at school. They were responsible for discipline and guiding the moral and physical upbringing of the child.

The paidagōgos was a strict disciplinarian who provided oversight and protection, ensuring that the child was prepared and disciplined. The word "paidagōgos" thus conveys an element of authority and temporary oversight.

Paul uses "paidagōgos" to describe the role of the law in relation to humanity before Christ. The law acted like a guardian or disciplinarian, guiding and instructing people until the coming of Christ. Its role was to protect and keep people in line, but it was temporary, leading them ultimately to Christ, through whom they could be justified by faith.

The law is there to give guidance to us. It guides us (points us) to Jesus Christ. Like the paidagōgos, the law supervises us. By itself, the law is not a teacher because the real teacher is Jesus Christ. Also, like the paidagōgos, it played a temporary work in providing temporary oversight to people before the Lord Jesus Christ came. It was like a caregiver who takes care of the real owner’s property while he is not there.

Let’s make this clearer: Picture a caregiver taking care of a house while the owner is away. Present in that house are the owner’s children. The caregiver’s job is to ensure that the children are well fed and protected. He ensures that the children abide by the rules of the house, and they do not

damage anything in the house. When the owner comes back, the owner will feed and protect the children by himself since he has higher and greater ability than the caregiver. The coming back of the owner does not give the children leeway to do what they want.

The children are not allowed to misbehave and destroy the home just because the owner has arrived. In fact, the rules will be stricter when the owner is there than when the caregiver is there. This is because it is the owner who authored (whether by writing or speech), the home rules. Therefore, he understands those rules more clearly and deeply than the caregiver.

The caregiver does not have the full capacity to teach the children like the owner does. The owner would require a higher standard of discipline from the children. He will also be able to teach them in the best possible way because he understands the children more than the caregiver. He understands them at an individual level and knows which learning style is fit for everyone. Therefore, with the owner's guidance, the children will be able to obey more than they would with the caregiver alone. The law is our caregiver. It disciplines us and guides us to the owner, Jesus Christ Himself.

Hebrews 10:16 (AMP) - "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will imprint My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will inscribe them [producing an inward change]."

Jesus, the author of the law will write the law in our hearts when we surrender to Him.

Justification By Faith

Luke 18:9-14 (AMP) - "[9] He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves *and* were confident that they were righteous [posing outwardly as upright and in right standing with God], and who viewed others with contempt: [10] "Two men went up into the temple [enclosure] to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee stood [ostentatiously] and began praying to himself [in a self-righteous way, saying]: 'God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—swindlers, unjust (dishonest), adulterers—or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' [13] But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even raise his eyes toward heaven, but was striking his chest [in humility and repentance], saying, 'God,

be merciful *and* gracious to me, the [especially wicked] sinner [that I am]!' [14] I tell you, this man went to his home justified [forgiven of the guilt of sin and placed in right standing with God] rather than the other man; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself [forsaking self-righteous pride] will be exalted."

As a result of his humility, the tax collector went back justified unlike the pharisee. The Pharisee was self-righteous. He felt that he was self-sufficient and that he did not need to do more. Most of us reach this stage in our Christian journey and unfortunately, we get stuck at this stage. When God gives you victory over a particular sin that you were struggling with and when He makes you do other good things, you begin looking down on others. We may even go bragging about how righteous we have become to others and making them feel like the worst sinners.

Sometimes when we are at this stage, God allows us to fall into temptation so that we may know that we are not as strong as we thought. We behave like Peter when Jesus made him walk on water. When we fall is when we know that we are in constant need of the Savior. That is why the statement, "Once saved, always saved" is an erroneous statement. God is the one to justify us because we cannot justify ourselves. It is like a student trying to mark his test papers. If he tries to do that, he will tick all his answers as correct and give himself the highest mark. That will reveal the selfishness of the student. Justifying ourselves reveals the selfish nature in us.

Righteousness by faith refers to the state of being declared or made righteous before God through faith in Jesus Christ. It emphasizes the ongoing process or state of being righteous in God's sight, which begins at the moment of justification (being declared righteous) and continues as a lifelong transformation by the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith refers specifically to the act or legal declaration of God declaring a person righteous based on their faith in Jesus Christ.

It focuses on the initial act of God's grace where God forgives a person's sins, and they are declared righteous in God's sight. It is a once-for-all-time event. Romans 3:28 emphasizes that a person is justified (declared righteous) by faith apart from the works of the law, highlighting that our acceptance before God is not based on our own merit but on Christ's sacrifice and our faith in Him.

Justification is a one-time legal declaration that happens at the moment of faith in Christ. Righteousness, on the other hand, is both a status and a process that begins with justification and continues throughout the believer's life.

Justification primarily focuses on the forgiveness of sins and the legal standing before God, while righteousness by faith encompasses both the legal standing and the ongoing process of living in alignment with God's will and character.

Through the power of Jesus, all who believe are justified from all things which we could not be justified by the law. One purpose of the law was to expose sin (Romans 3:20). Through God's law we get to know what sin is. Keeping the whole law as human beings with our carnal nature is impossible. We need to depend on Jesus to help us live the holy life that He wants us to.

James 2:20-24 (KJ21) - "[20] But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? [22] Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? [23] And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God. [24] Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

These verses emphasize that faith and actions go hand in hand. James illustrates this point with Abraham's example. He explains how genuine faith is demonstrated through actions, and faith is perfected by what we do. Faith without actions is dead. What actions? Righteous actions. Out of our own sinful nature, we cannot do righteous actions. If we do them, we often do them with an evil motive. Thus, nullifying the 'good' works that we have done.

The sinful nature in us has made our hearts exceedingly selfish and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). We are desperate to act in wickedness. Jesus Christ is at the door of our hearts knocking (Revelation 3:22). When we abide in Him and allow Him to abide in us, the Great Enabler will enable us to act in righteousness. Our righteous actions will be accompanied by righteous motives, and He will make us to be holy as He is holy.

The Bible tells us in James 2:21 that Abraham, our father, was justified by works when he offered Isaac his son as a sacrifice on the altar (according to God's command). God stopped Abraham from killing Isaac and provided a ram in replacement of Isaac to be offered upon the altar. However, Abraham's obedience to God and willingness to sacrifice his only son whom he had waited for so long pleased God and God justified his faith.

Abraham did his part by doing what God had commanded and enabled him to. It was up to God to choose whether Isaac should be killed or not. Abraham did not carry a sacrificial animal with him, but God ended up providing him one. In the past there was a sacrificial system whereby people burned animals at the altar for their sins to be forgiven.

The sacrificial system was fair, and each one was required to offer a sacrifice according to how God had blessed them. The poor were not subject to the same sacrifice as the rich. Even in the tithe system, God does not ask for a fixed tithe amount. Instead, He asks for ten percent of all your increase (Malachi 3:10). That should show us how fair and loving God is.

God asks you to return to Him a very small portion of what He has already given to you. Abraham was very rich (Genesis 13:2), but God still provided for Abraham a ram to offer to Him as a sacrifice. God's infinite love does not allow Him to stop providing. What God required Abraham to do was to sacrifice what he had already given him. In his usual faithful obedience, he did that. By the works that Jesus had enabled Abraham to do, Abraham's faith was made perfect.

Psalm 119:9 (KJ21) - "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." The word 'young' is relative. Someone who is one hundred and thirty years of age today is very old according to modern standards of lifespan. However, according to Methuselah (the oldest person who ever lived, Genesis 5:27) and other antediluvians (Genesis 5:3-32), a one hundred-and-thirty-year-old is very young.

According to the angels, Methuselah and the other antediluvians are young. This is because the antediluvians lived for almost one thousand years while the angels have been there for thousands of years. According to God, the angels are young as they have a beginning while God has no beginning. Therefore, a young person in the context of Psalm 119:9 refers to every human being that is living.

We are all children of God, meaning we are all young people. The word young in this text is used to refer to someone who is spiritually young rather than young by physical age. All of us are spiritually young because we are dependent on God all the days of our lives. No one, no matter the extent of our achievements, fully understands God and His Word because God is infinite. God promises believers eternal life (John 3:16).

As we enjoy our lives with God in our glorious home, we will keep on receiving new revelations concerning Him. That means it will take eternity to know and understand God fully. It will take an eternity to apply God's Word fully. This is because we will be living in obedience to Him each single day of our eternal lifespan. This means that it will take forever to gain full spiritual maturity. We will be made new and perfect without sin, but we will be constantly and continually learning about God.

In Psalm 119:9, God gives us a way to be sanctified. He provides us with a key to becoming righteous. He tells us that when we take heed of His Word, we will be made holy. The more you obey God, the better you become in character. We have limited our spiritual and character development by limiting our obedience to God. We are willing to do so much for God but not so much. We have placed a barrier in what we can do for God. This barrier has done a 'great' job in forming a barrier against our blessings. Those blessings include spiritual blessings.

God spoke to me in various ways at various times to start writing for Him. Writing is a skill that God has given me. When I obeyed God and started writing, I realized that worldly desires and sinful propensities would drop one by one. The more I serve God, the better I become in all aspects of my life, including the spiritual life as well. Myron Golden says, "Your gift is given to you, for you and through you." Your gift is given to benefit others and to help you.

God uses my gift as an agency for character improvement when I obey Him through the diligent and faithful use of it. The beauty of obeying God is that God does not require from you what He has not given you the power to do. Ellen G. White says, "His biddings are enablings." Pastor Randy Skeete says, "The power to obey the command is in the command."

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do." - Christ Object Lessons, Page 363.2, Ellen G. White.

"The spirit of the slothful servant we are often fain to call humility. But true humility is widely different. To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully.

Real humility fulfills God's purposes by depending upon His strength." - Christ Object Lessons, Page 363.3, Ellen G. White.

"God works by whom He will. He sometimes selects the humblest instrument to do the greatest work, for His power is revealed through the weakness of men. We have our standard, and by it we pronounce one thing great and another small; but God does not estimate according to our rule. We are not to suppose that what is great to us must be great to God, or that what is small to us must be small to Him. It does not rest with us to pass judgment on our talents or to choose our work. We are to take up the burdens that God appoints, bearing them for His sake, and ever going to Him for rest. Whatever our work, God is honored by wholehearted, cheerful service. He is pleased when we take up our duties with gratitude, rejoicing that we are accounted worthy to be co-laborers with Him." - Christ Object Lessons, Page 363.4, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:7 talks about Noah who became an heir of righteousness by faith. The same verse tells us that Noah built an ark before becoming an heir of God's righteousness. The question is, who told him to build an ark? God was the one who told him to build an ark.

God not only told him to build an ark, but He also gave him specific directions on how to build that ark. He told him the materials and the exact measurements to use. He provided the materials to Noah. We often overlook this; He gave Noah the physical and mental ability to do that work. All that God required of Noah was obedience in building that ark. After Noah built it, God saved him and his family and called him righteous.

The New Testament tells us in James 2:22 that by works faith is made perfect. Faith is imperfect without deeds. Actions make faith perfect. When you are asking God to help you understand a subject and you are trusting in Him to answer your request, you need to take the study materials and study that subject. While studying, God will open your understanding to make you understand it. If you do not read on that subject, God cannot help you understand.

Sometimes God can use divine revelation to reveal some things to you, but He will rarely do that when the materials to study and the knowledgeable people on that subject are right within your reach. God cannot help you understand what you are unfamiliar with. Therefore, take that book and read. The same applies when asking God to help you understand the Bible when you have

never read it. Believing that God will help you understand the Bible is faith. But your faith is imperfect since you have not even tried to open the Bible.

Your faith will be made perfect when you open God's Holy Book to study. Once God makes your faith perfect, He answers your prayers and helps you understand because you have acted on true faith. While writing this book, this has been the last chapter which I have written. I avoided it and chose to write the other chapters before it because I had minimal knowledge and understanding on the righteousness by faith topic. Before I studied it, I asked God to enlighten and guide me on this subject while I study it.

The faithful God did His part and led me through it. He would prompt me to look for the meaning of certain words in their original untranslated languages. He would prompt me to look at various Bible versions. The same thing that happened when I studied this topic has been happening ever since I started studying the Bible.

Faith in the Heart First

James 2:23 (KJ21) - "And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God."

In James 2:23, the original Greek word for "fulfilled" is "ἐπληρώθη" (eplērōthē), which comes from the root "πληρόω" (plēroō). The meaning of this word is "to make full, to complete, to bring to realization." In the context of James 2:23, it conveys the idea that Abraham's faith was brought to completion or fully realized through his actions, fulfilling the scripture that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

In Genesis 15, the Word of God came to Abraham in a vision telling him to fear not because God is his shield and his exceeding great reward (Genesis 15:1). A popular hymn with the title, Give Me Jesus by Fanny J. Crosby says, "You can have all this world, Give me Jesus." Nigerian singer Judikay in her song, More than Gold says, "Jesus is more than gold." When you have God alone, you have more than everything.

After Abraham heard God's Word, He inquired from God about his childless state. Probably Abraham could not understand what God meant when He said that He is his shield and his

exceeding great reward when He was childless. How could God be his exceeding great reward while He could not reward him with a child?

You have been sleeping hungry, unable to pay bills and heavily indebted and then someone comes and tells you that God is the provider. Sometimes you may read a Bible verse that talks about God being the provider. Such a statement can confuse you because you will wonder, how is God the provider and He has not provided for you yet?

God told Abraham that knowing that Abraham lacked a child. He also knew that Abraham and his spouse really wanted a child. God, who knows the end and the beginning, knew that Abraham wanted a child, but He still proceeded to tell him that He is his protector and provider.

Abraham and his spouse Sarah had waited for a child for so long. Therefore, he thought that God's plan was to have Eleazar of Damascus as his heir. That shows how we like confining the limitless God to our limitations. Saying this showed that he had completely lost hope of having a child with his spouse Sarah.

You have been praying for a job or for a financial breakthrough for ten years, but no door is opening then God comes and tells you that He is your shield and your exceeding great reward. You have been praying and hoping for a spouse for so long but still there is no light at the end of the tunnel. When you are in such a situation like Abraham was, you may think that God is playing games with you. Therefore, you might be quick to dismiss Him.

God took Abraham outside and told him to look at the sky (Genesis 15:5). When Abraham looked up, he saw innumerable stars. God went ahead and told him that if he could number the stars then he shall be able to count his offspring (Genesis 15:5). It was impossible for Abraham to count the stars

God knew Abraham had a common human limitation and he would not be able to accurately count the stars. No single astronomer nor the most advanced scientific machinery including the Hubble Space Telescope and the James Webb Space Telescope has been able to accurately count the stars. However, it is estimated that there are 100 to 400 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy (this is an estimate, and not an accurate figure).

In the observable universe, there might be around one hundred billion galaxies, each having billions of stars. How does this connect to the story of Abraham? This shows that God was going to bless Abraham beyond common human ability and understanding. He would bless him with blessings as uncountable as the stars of the sky.

If God had told some of us this, we would hate God on the spot. This is because we would look at our current physical situation and feel that God is jesting on our painful situation. How could God make such a magnanimous promise while He has not yet done His part of fulfilling the smallest promise by giving them at least one child?

You are sixty years old, and you have never had an income. You are as broke as a balloon at a porcupine convention. You have been applying for jobs and getting rejected. You have been starting businesses and they end up failing. You have done all that you can, but people still judge you and call you lazy. You have submitted your prayer requests countless times in church. You have fasted and prayed for countless days then God comes to tell you that you will be a billionaire. Would you believe Him?

The Bible says in Genesis 15:6 (AMP) which is quoted in James 2:23, “Then Abram believed in (trusted in, relied on, and remained steadfast to) the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness (as in right standing with God).” In this case, Abraham did no physical action. He simply believed in his heart that God could do whatever He says. Pastor Randy Skeete says that faith is believing that God could do something whether He does it or not. He says that faith is believing more in God’s ability than activity.

There are some things that God has promised that have not yet happened such as the second coming of Jesus Christ. When we judge God based on what has not yet been done to us, we may not have faith in God. Therefore, our requests to Him will be powerless, yielding little to no results. God wants us to acknowledge what He has already done and believe that He has the power to do what we ask Him to do, according to His will.

Exodus 19:4-5 (KJV) - "[4] Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. [5] Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is Mine." In Exodus 19:4, God tells the Israelites what He has already done for them before He

gives them the command (to obey His voice). In other words, He is telling them, “You have seen what I can do, you have seen My power, now have faith in Me and obey Me and I will do more unto you.”

Before God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, He told them in Exodus 20:2 (KJV) - "I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Before God gives them the Decalogue, He reminds them of the evidence of His power and wants them to base their faith upon that evidence.

When we believe that God can do something, even though He has not yet done it, we will approach God with faith. Abraham believed that God could do it even though He had not yet done it. The belief they had in his heart that God would fulfill His promise was accounted to him for righteousness. We need to have faith in our hearts first. This is because what is in our heart handles our outer actions. Abraham believed in God that God would make him a father of many nations even though he was getting old with no single child and God accounted that for righteousness.

When God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to offer his only son, without hesitation, Abraham obeyed God and agreed to offer Isaac. This showed that he believed that everything comes from God. He believed that God had the ability to make him a father of many nations even if He took away the only child that he had. When God saw that Abraham’s faith in Him was accompanied by an act of obedience, He justified Abraham’s faith (James 2:21).

James 2:23 (KJV) - "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." This means that the scripture in Genesis 15:6 was made complete and was proven beyond doubt that Abraham truly believed in the Lord.

Romans 3:22-31 (KJ21) - “[22] Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all those who believe. For there is no difference; [23] For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, [24] being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; [26] to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. [27] Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. [28]

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. [29] Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, [30] seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcised by faith, and uncircumcised through faith. [31] Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

What Paul meant in Romans 3:22 is that one cannot be justified by barely doing good deeds. One needs to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many decent people out there who do good deeds but do not believe in Jesus. Some pharisees used to do good deeds but did not believe in Jesus. Therefore, they could not be justified. The law is incomplete without Jesus, its author.

Some people may misuse Romans 3:22 to make it appear that the law has been done away with. What does the Bible say about that at the end of chapter 3? Romans 3:31 (KJ21) - "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." Faith in God does not destroy the law. Instead, it fulfills the law. Faith in God does not drive away the law. Instead, it establishes the law. Faith in God gives the law a firmer and more grounded foundation.

Who can be Justified by Faith?

Romans 3:29 (KJ21) - "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."

God is a God of everyone because He created everybody. Therefore, regardless of race, nationality, color, age, all who believe in Jesus will be justified.

John 3:16 (KJ21) - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God gave His only begotten son Jesus because He wanted to save the entire world from sin.

2 Peter 3:9 (KJ21) - "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

God wants to save everybody. He wants everyone to repent. He wants everyone to inherit His kingdom.

Romans 4:5 (KJ21) - "But to him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Romans 4:5 does not mean that we are free to do what we want. It does not mean that we are free to commit sin. It means that we cannot be justified by our own works, being dependent on our own efforts to attain salvation. It means that we are justified by faith in God. Faith in God means total trust in God. It is believing that you are dependent on God in everything, including living a righteous life. Acts 17:28 (KJ21) - "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

Exodus 31:13 (KJ21) - "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.'"

The Sabbath points us to God as the Creator (Exodus 20:11) and it points us to God as the sanctifier (Exodus 31:13). When we depend on ourselves, we will get so weary since we have limited strength and capacity. When we depend on God, we will be able to do greater works than we had ever imagined since the power of God that works in us is limitless.

Romans 5:1 (KJ21) - "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sin robs us of peace, but justification by faith leads us to have peace with God and peace in our hearts. Many Christians are wondering why they cannot find peace. Some feel that something is missing but they do not know what it is. When you yield to the power of Jesus Christ and obey all that He tells you to obey, you will show that you believe in God indeed. Thus, your faith will be justified by God, and you will have peace. One main reason why sinners lack peace in their hearts is because of guilt.

Obedience to God includes completing all the assignments that God has given you. Uncompletion of God-given assignments robs your mind of peace. Before completing this book, my mind would get disturbed as I would feel an urgent need to complete it. I had plenty of peace in Jesus Christ, but this one assignment would rob me of some element of peace. I would not be able to hang out with friends for long because I would feel that there is something I am supposed to do that I have not yet done.

God has given you the power to do what He has told you to do. Why not do it? God has given you the power to complete what He has already started. Why not complete it? In the end, we will all be able to say like Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7, KJ21)."

Galatians 3:10-11 (AMP) - "[10] For all who depend on the law seeking justification and salvation will be under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, so as to practice them.' [11] Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the Law, for 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

The law cannot justify you. It is God who justifies you through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is believing in Him, opening the doors of your heart, yielding to His control and obeying His Word. When you do not obey God fully, you are under a curse (Galatians 3:10). By your human power, it is impossible to keep the whole law. However, when you believe in Jesus, you are justified. The power of Jesus enables you to keep the whole law.

Joseph Bates was an American sea captain and one of the earthly pioneers of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. In his book, "The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates," he talks about his struggles with using profane language and tobacco (cigarette) addiction. He was not able to overcome tobacco addiction till much later in his life.

In that same book, while talking about the last day he ever used tobacco, he says, "Step by step I had gained this victory — nature never required either. I never used the articles, except to keep company with my associates. How many millions have been ruined by such debasing and ruinous habits? How much more like a human I felt when I had gained the mastery in these things and overcome them all." Step by step, God will enable you to overcome all the sins that are imprisoning you when you yield to His divine control.

One may die as an imperfect person while still struggling with some sins and while still not able to keep the entire law. When that happens but your commitment to be righteous is one hundred percent, Christ will justify you and He will impute His righteousness in you. Jesus will complete for you that which you have left incomplete. A good example is the thief on the cross. Therefore, you cannot judge who will go to heaven and who would not based on the lives you have seen them living on earth.

Philippians 3:7-9 (KJ21) - "[7] But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. [8] Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, [9] and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

The Holy Word of God says in Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” When we try to obey God depending on our own ability, we are seeking to enter God’s kingdom by our own righteousness. Such is dangerous because it will cause us to give up easily as we have limited effort and power to fight against the powerful evil forces. However, when we depend on God to make us righteous, we are depending on His power and seeking His righteousness.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJ21) - “[1] Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, [2] looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Bible says that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. To add to this, Myron Golden says, “it does not say that He is the author, and He is going to be the finisher. This means that He started it, and He also finished it because it is not my faith, it is His faith. He instilled His faith in me. God gave you the faith to receive the grace which is salvation.”

Our own righteousness is garbage. It is like a filthy rug. Isaiah 64:6 (KJ21) - "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." God’s righteousness that is received through faith in Jesus Christ is the true righteousness that comes from God. Righteousness is by faith but faith without works is dead. Our faith needs to be shown in the actions that God has given us power to do.

GOD BLESS YOU!

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Prayer

Dear God, please help me seek your kingdom first and your righteousness. Give me the power to overcome all the sins that I have not been able to overcome. Impute your righteousness in me and make me acknowledge my dependence on you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write all the evil things that you would like God to help you overcome.
2. Create a private journal to write about your progress in overcoming those sins.
3. Pray for the people close to you (either by blood relation or in proximity) to overcome the sins that you see them doing.

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CHAPTER 27

FAITH IN THE FAMILY

Like the oak that stands firm amidst the storm,

Faith, unyielding, keeps the family safe and warm,

God is the family's pillar and divine cornerstone,

His Word should be our only steppingstone.

Through life's ebb and flow, we find solace and peace,

In the arms of our family, where love will not cease,

For faith and family, bound by God's decree,

Are the cornerstone of a blessed legacy.

For "I can do all things through Christ," we confess,

Who strengthens us and grants us divine success,

Our families are shielded from all bitterness,

For God's love and mercy and His grace, we embrace.

For "As for me and my house," we proclaim,

"We will serve the Lord," and honor His name,

For faith in God raises the dead and heals the lame,

Faith in the Most High pleases God and glorifies His name.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

Genesis 7:1 (KJV) – “And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”

Noah’s faith enabled his entire household to be saved from the flood’s destruction. Noah was diligent in building the ark. His family gave him the support he needed while making it. He had been given the mandate by God to build the ark, and he laboured tirelessly on it for one hundred and twenty years.

The Head of the Family

God has called men to pursue a particular purpose and lead their homes accordingly. Some obey God’s commands and successfully lead their families to walk in the ways of the Lord. Such a person bestows eternal blessings in his home through his leadership. Like Noah, the members of his household are saved from destruction through the faith he possesses. His faith in action is a blessing to people outside his home, and the blessings he gives others are reflected in his home.

Noah moved with fear. He acted immediately, leaving no space for doubt in his heart. He embarked diligently on the task that God had given him. He did not focus on those who criticized him. His focus was on God.

“The Head of the Family Firm—The husband and father is the head of the household. The wife looks to him for love and sympathy and for aid in the training of the children; and this is right. The children are his as well as hers, and he is equally interested in their welfare. The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His Word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way.” –The Adventist Home, Page 211.4, Ellen G. White.

Decisions that Govern the Family

Joshua 24:15 (KJV) – "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

As the head of his house, Joshua had to take a firm stand on their chosen path. This should be the stand of every Christian man. The first role of a man is to be a priest in his home. God has given him the responsibility to lead the family in the ordained ways of God. Putting God first makes him a pillar of strength to the family and a threat to Satan.

It is a widespread practice in society to witness mothers taking their children to church while fathers stay at home or go about other businesses. Unfortunately, according to numerous studies, most children brought up by fathers who are weak in faith end up being weak in faith no matter how Godly their mothers may be.

Solution to Societal Problems

Herbert W. Armstrong said most societal problems would be solved if we put fathers in their rightful place. A man who puts God first cannot be abusive. He cannot be a drunkard, and he cannot be adulterous. Instead, he will have nobility of character and steadfastness in purpose.

A man needs to set particular times for family prayer sessions. He needs to fix days for family fasting. He needs to encourage members of his family to use their God-given skills and talents to serve God while he is leading by example. He needs to emphasize Godly issues more than all other issues. Unfortunately, it is not strange to find some Christian fathers putting a stronger emphasis on academics and careers than on spiritual matters.

Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." His family includes him; therefore, if he said, "We will serve God as a family," it would still be okay. However, he said, "As for me and my house," because he had to separate himself from his family in that decision. In other words, if his home chooses not to serve God, He would still serve God.

The decision to serve God should first be an individual decision. After you have made that decision is when you can lead your family towards it (not force them but lead them). Joshua told the crowd to choose whom they will serve, but for him and his household, they will serve God. We need to lead our families and unite them in worship before we lead others.

Family Worship

Some people serve diligently in church but rarely have time for family worship. Some strive to give their best service in the church, ensuring the church is functioning well but play a huge role in breaking their own homes.

It is not strange to see wives being submissive to the church pastor while they are not submissive to their husbands. It is not peculiar to see people giving gifts to their pastors while never giving anything to their parents. Sometimes familiarity breeds contempt, and we tend to consider our family members less important because we live with them and are used to them.

"The Lawmaker and Priest—All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice. The wife and children should be encouraged to unite in this offering and also to engage in the song of praise. Morning and evening the father, as priest of the household, should confess to God the sins committed by himself and his children through the day. Those sins which have come to his knowledge and also those which are secret, of which God's eye alone has taken cognizance, should be confessed. This rule of action, zealously carried out by the father when he is present or by the mother when he is absent, will result in blessings to the family." – The Adventist Home, Page 212.1, Ellen G. White.

Family and the Sabbath

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy

cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

When giving the Sabbath commandment, God had the family unit in mind. He commanded that we should not allow our children, servants and everyone within our household to violate the Sabbath.

In this fourth commandment, God addresses the head of the family when He says, "Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." First, this commandment is to be observed in the family unit because a society is formed by many families.

If each family obeys the Sabbath commandment (and all other commandments) in a society, then it is followed by the whole community. This commandment points us to God as the Creator when it reminds us of how God rested on the Seventh day after creation. Therefore, if we obey it, we acknowledge God as the Creator, and if we truly recognize God as the Creator, we shall easily observe the other nine.

Before God mentions the household members to be led by you in obeying His commands, He first mentions you. Exodus 20:10 (KJV) – "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

The commandment starts by addressing us before it addresses our sons, daughters and other household members. "Thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter." What does this mean? This means we need to obey God's commandments before leading others to follow them. Words have more power if actions back them up. A sermon is more effective if a person practices what he preaches.

Some may argue that the congregation will not know if they are actively living the sermon. Indeed, the congregation might not know, but they may sense more authority in a person who lives his word more than one who merely preaches. Matthew 7:28-29 (KJV) – "[28] And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: [29] For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Jesus spoke as one having authority because He lived by every Word He preached. For example, He taught people to love their enemies, and He portrayed this when He restored the ear of the soldier whom Peter had cut (Luke 22:49-51). Fathers have a solemn responsibility as heads of the family to keep God's commandments and to lead their families in obeying God's law.

A Righteous Influence on the Family

Genesis 18:19 (KJV) – "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him."

Abraham always pleased God because he continuously acted in faith. God knew that Abraham would have a righteous influence on his family when He said, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." Abraham's influence brought blessings to his entire household and future generations. Abraham not only preached to his family, but he practiced what he preached.

Job offered sacrifices to God for his family members

Job 1:5 (KJV) – "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Job's devotion to God was so much that he tried to ensure his family members had the right standing with God. He offered sacrifices for his children in case they sinned wherever they went to.

Some parents assume their children are righteous because they behave properly at home. Some children have habits that their parents are not aware of. Therefore, it is not wise to assume that your children are sinless. It is essential to pray for them, asking God to forgive them for their sins and to bring them closer to Him. It can also be a precious activity when parents take days to fast for their children.

Adam's Fall

Genesis 3:17 (KJV) – "And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

A negative influence in the family can lead the whole family to destruction. Each member of the family should be diligent in studying God's Word, knowing what God requires of them. God told Adam because he chose to obey his wife's Word and disobeyed God's Word, he shall suffer a curse.

There are consequences of putting another person's Word above God's Word. Therefore, knowing what the Word of God says in various aspects of our life is profitable. Knowledge of God's Word will shield us from confusion. Many struggle to figure out life because they have a limited understanding of God's Word.

In Matthew 6:33 (KJV), the Bible says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." We need to seek God's kingdom first before pursuing anything else. We do that by studying scripture and applying it. This will make our path more straightforward, for God is not an author of confusion. Therefore, we shall be shielded from all evil influences, including the ones that may come from our family members.

Do We Think of Our families?

Joshua 2:12-13 (KJV) – "[12] Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: [13] And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

Rahab did not think of herself alone. She thought of her family. It is pretty common to see people seeking blessings for themselves alone, having absolutely no regard for their family members.

It is not surprising to see siblings fighting over family property, some going to the extent of killing each other. Rahab was not selfish. She asked the men to save her parents and her siblings together

with their property. Many families have the spirit of competition whereby one sibling wants to be more successful than the other.

Therefore, they do everything to win over their fellow siblings instead of cooperating with them. Some children live while secretly wishing for their parents' death so they can get their share of the parent's property. Rahab had her family's best interest at heart. A certain 5-year-old girl in church impressed me when I promised her a Bible, and she asked, "Will you buy one for my brother?" She was not thinking of herself alone. She was thinking of her brother as well.

Joshua 6:25 (KJV) – "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

Rahab's faithful action saved her family from being destroyed. Children should not be undermined. A child can bring blessings to the family that would not have been gotten if the child had not been there. Rahab's actions saved her brothers and sisters.

Our Siblings

We should not undermine and neglect our brothers and sisters, no matter how sinful we think them to be. Rahab was a harlot, but she brought salvation to her family. Some families have divisions inside them whereby financially and academically successful siblings segregate themselves and do not want to associate with unsuccessful ones. Such discrimination can deprive us of our most needed blessings.

I was looking for mentorship in my career, and all the mentorship programs that I knew of were costly, and I could not afford them. While conversing with my brother Martin, he told me about MicroMentor, a platform that offers you world-class mentors for free.

Genesis 47:11 (KJV) – "And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded."

Joseph brought blessings to his father and brothers. His fathers and brothers were saved from encountering the famine that was so severe in their land because Joseph moved them to Egypt.

Joseph's brothers had done great evil against Joseph by selling him as an enslaved person to the land of Egypt, but Joseph did not take revenge. Instead, he recompensed evil for good. His love for them brought them closer to God and made them love each other. The best remedy is love. Love wins all battles.

King Josiah

2 Kings 22:2 (KJV) – "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

King Josiah did not follow in the footsteps of his father Amon and his grandfather Manasseh. Some people think because their parents were bound by a particular sin, they are forever doomed to live a life of bondage in that sin.

We should follow the good example of our parents and ask Jesus to help us not fall into the same temptations they fell into. King Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, he would have given himself an excuse to worship idols like his father because he was a child, but he did not. Instead, he cherished the one and only true God.

Abraham was from a lineage of idolaters but did not worship idols. He worshipped God and clung firmly to Him. We should ask God to break any generational habits and curses that we might be having and ask Him to give us the strength to walk in the way He has predestined for us.

God above Family

Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

We should love our families wholeheartedly, but God should always come first because it is God who created the family.

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GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you with hearts filled with gratitude for the blessings you've bestowed upon us. As we gather in prayer, we acknowledge your sovereignty and grace in our lives. You are the Alpha and Omega, the source of all wisdom and love.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of family, a sacred bond created by your divine design. We lift our families to you, seeking your guidance, protection, and abundant blessings. May our homes be filled with the warmth of your love, the light of your wisdom, and the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Father, we pray for the leaders of our families. Grant them strength, patience, and wisdom as they navigate life's challenges. May they lead by example, reflecting your love and grace in their words and actions.
We pray for unity within our families. Please help us to cultivate an atmosphere of understanding, forgiveness, and compassion. Let your Holy Spirit dwell in our homes, bringing harmony and joy into every heart.

Lord, we bring before you the individual members of our families. May each person profoundly experience your love. Heal the wounds, comfort the broken-hearted, and strengthen those who are weak. Grant us the grace to support and encourage one another on this faith journey.
As we face the challenges of life, we seek your guidance. Illuminate our path with your divine light so that we may walk in righteousness. Please help us to make decisions that honor you and contribute to the well-being of our families.

We lift up those families who are facing trials and tribulations. Lord, be their refuge and strength in times of trouble. Bring healing to the sick, comfort to the grieving, and provision to those in need. Your mercy knows no bounds, and we trust in your unfailing love.

In all things, we surrender our families into your loving hands, knowing that you are the ultimate source of protection and provision. May our homes be sanctuaries of love, faith, and joy, reflecting the beauty of your grace. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- List at least 5 ways that you can use to bless your family members.
- Set a fasting schedule together with your family members.
- Set a family prayer and worship schedule with your family members.

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CHAPTER 28

FAITH IS FEARING GOD

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Who made you? God or man,

In the cosmic plan, where destinies span,

Faith intertwined with the fear of God,

Will put you in line with God's great plan.

The fear of God, our compass in the wilderness,

Faith in God guides you in divine righteousness,

Who can save you? Man or God?

Let's lean on the Divine Rod, the One true Lord.

The fear of God, a mirror reflecting the soul,

Faith in God reveals truths that make us whole,

The fear of God is a fortress strong and tall,

Faith in God guards against the enemy's every call.

The fear of God a flawless antivirus,

Faith defends us from the malware of wicked vices,

The fear of God, a mic-drop moment in the soul,

Faith makes us whole when we heed every Divine Scroll.

Faith in God unlocks the secrets of life's grand dreams,

The fear of God gives you joy than all the latest memes,

Faith drops blessings brighter than spotlights and laser beams,

Holding tight to Christ, the supreme who redeems.

Faith in God wins over my life's darkest night,

The fear of God brings the dawn of eternal light,

When walking, faith puts me on the fastest flight,

Faith in God protects than a shining armor knight.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

When God warned Noah of the flood that would come, he moved with fear. Whom did Noah fear? Is it God or man? The Bible tells us that God warned Noah and instructed him to build an ark (Genesis 6:13-21). We can see in Noah's story that only Noah and his family entered the ark (Genesis 7).

Genesis 6:9 describes Noah as a just man, perfect in his generation and one who walked with God. Even before God commanded Noah to build the ark, Noah's ways pleased God. This means that Noah was always God-fearing. The other inhabitants of the earth did not fear God, so they were not saved.

The fear of God caused Noah to proceed with faith and act immediately. Genesis 6:22 (NKJV) – “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” The fear of God caused Noah to obey everything that God said.

The benefits brought by the fear of God are innumerable. Some of them are:

- **The Fear of God increases knowledge**

Proverbs 1:7 (KJV) – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

The fear of God enables one to increase in knowledge. By having faith in God and obeying God, Noah increased in knowledge of God. Later, he witnessed God's power bringing a flood and destroying all the disobedient people. The rain had never fallen on the earth. Therefore, it seemed ridiculous to some people when Noah told them a flood was coming.

With his encounter with God, Noah realized that with God, nothing is impossible. He realized that God could cause things that have never happened to happen. Through the building of the ark, Noah increased in other skills. He had never built such a structure before. It was advantageous when God gave him that assignment as he knew how to build an ark that would sail through the water withstanding the great flood.

In his 120 years of service, Noah learnt of the materials to use from the natural environment to build such a magnificent and sturdy structure. He learnt skills in carpentry also. A lot of science was learnt in the construction of the ark, and this education was highly beneficial to Noah. Noah acquired spiritual fruits such as patience because 120 years is a long time to build something. One must have patience and discipline to take a project from ideation to completion.

If you take a step of faith and author that Christian book that you have been procrastinating on, you will increase in knowledge because you will have to read and research more to find content to add to the book. If you take a step of faith and start a corporation, you will increase in knowledge because you will learn how a business is operated through the process. Faith combined with the fear of God leads to more acquisition of information. Not only does it lead to more acquisition of information, but it also leads to the acquisition of useful information.

- **The fear of God increases wisdom**

Proverbs 9:10 (KJV) – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Wisdom is the application of truth. The fear of God enables one to apply the knowledge they have acquired correctly. Not only does it help them to apply knowledge correctly, but it also makes them apply it in the best conceivable way.

If we surrender our limited knowledge to the infinite one, the application of it is infinite. He whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours wants us to mingle with Him so that our ways and thoughts can be as high as heaven is from the earth. Created in His image, He desires us to reflect His infinite nature in our finite lives. He will give you infinite ideas on how to use your knowledge if you obey Him.

Some professors with multiple university degrees have a low view of God because of their pride in their elevated level of education. As a result, they are limited in ways to apply that knowledge and end up doing little with the much knowledge they have gained.

Ellen G. White was a third grade dropout who wrote over one million pages covering all life topics. Millions worldwide have read her books. Through the application of the Biblical knowledge that flows from her books many have succeeded in various fields. She achieved that feat because she

feared God and acknowledged Him to be the source of all knowledge and wisdom. As a result, God worked through her to do a tremendous job. Faith increases one in wisdom and understanding.

- **The fear of God brings riches, honour and life**

Proverbs 22:4 (KJV) – “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life.”

Through faith, the fear of God brings riches and honour and life. Going back to the example of Noah, he acted by faith and was able to save his life and the lives of his family members. Rahab also acted by faith, and when the city of Jericho and its inhabitants were destroyed, she and her family members were saved.

The fifth commandment tells us to honour our parents if we want to lengthen our days. If we fear God and obey this commandment, God will keep His promise since we have faith in the one who is life (John 14:6; Genesis 2:7).

The fear of God brings wealth/blessings (Deuteronomy 8:1-2; Deuteronomy 28:1-13; Joshua 1:8; Daniel 7:27; Leviticus 26:1-13; Isaiah 58:13-14). The fear of God brings honour. Solomon was highly honoured that foreign royal people, such as the Queen of Sheba, came to seek his counsel (1 Kings 10:1-12 & 2 Chronicles 9:1-13).

Joseph feared God. He overcame the temptation of Potiphar's wife. This caused him to be thrown in prison, but he was later released and placed as the Prime Minister of Egypt (Genesis 39-41). The genuine fear of God he had, brought him riches and honour. It also brought him and his family life as he had divine wisdom on governing Egypt during the famine. Therefore, when famine arose, he could feed himself, his family, Egypt and various other nations coming to Egypt to acquire food.

Hebrews 11:23 (KJV) – “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

Moses' parents feared God and understood the value of Moses. By faith, they believed that it was God's will to have their child alive. Through faith, they acted shrewdly and hid Moses so he would not be killed. Many of us don't act by faith because we do not know the will of God. We do not know the will of God in our lives because we do not read His Word.

The Bible says in Romans 10:17 (KJV) – “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Faith is increased by constant study and obedience to God's Word. "If studied and

obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute." – Christ Object Lessons, Page 100.1, Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 11:24-27 (KJV) – "[24] By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. [27] By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Moses feared God more than he feared Pharaoh. By faith, he chose to suffer affliction with the Israelites than enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are seasonal. He understood that the affliction one may face in the cause of God is temporary while the rewards are eternal.

Therefore, he chose to endure the temporary problems in exchange for eternal life. He acted contrary to Esau, who exchanged a lifetime birth rite for a plate of food. Job feared God and refused to heed the counsel of his wife, who told him to curse God and die. His actions caused him to regain his health and receive double his previous riches. The parents of John the Baptist feared God and stood firmly to name their child John despite the pressure from relatives and friends (Luke 1).

The thief on the cross who pleaded with Jesus had faith that Jesus is the Messiah. At the last minute, he inherited eternal life. The fear of God gave him life. While the other one probably lost his life because he did not have a fear of God as he mocked Jesus (Luke 23:32-43).

We should only fear God, not man.

Jeremiah 17:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. [6] For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

Many of us fear fellow men more than God. We trust men more than God. Men can disappoint you because they cannot control what happens to them. God can never disappoint you because nothing can happen to Him that is why He can't lie (Numbers 23:19). Men are finite but God is infinite. Men are mortal, but God is immortal.

All created beings (including humans) are dependent, but God is independent. All men don't know how something will end, but God knows the end from the beginning. Men are weak but God is strong. Men are limited in everything, but God is unlimited in all good things. Men constantly try to figure out the way in life, but God is the way (John 14:6). What is impossible with men is possible with God.

Had Joseph's brothers known this, they would fear God and love their brother instead of selling him to Egypt for slavery. The lack of fear of the Lord caused them to lack faith in their actions, and thus they did what was detestable to God and to their family. Their action brought sorrow to their father and guilt among themselves.

Samson went contrary to God's command and married a foreign wife, Delilah. His hair was cut, and he lost his strength, so the Philistines overpowered him. God gave him physical strength that was beyond anyone in the world to defend the Israelites, but the strength given by God as a gift turned out to be a curse because of a lack of fear of God.

God gave Solomon great wisdom and riches in that no one before was like him, and no one after him reached his level. Like Samson, he married from foreign lands. He married numerous foreign wives who seduced him to worship other gods, and he built altars for his wives' gods to please them. His administration which was once favoured by God, started going down. He who once wrote, "Righteousness exalteth a nation", had his nation subside due to unrighteousness.

"Solomon's course brought its sure penalty. His separation from God through communication with idolaters was his ruin. As he cast off his allegiance to God, he lost the mastery of himself. His moral efficiency was gone. His fine sensibilities became blunted, his conscience seared. He who in his early reign had displayed so much wisdom and sympathy in restoring a helpless babe to its unfortunate mother (see 1 Kings 3:16-28), fell so low as to consent to the erection of an idol to whom living children were offered as sacrifices. He who in his youth was endowed with discretion and understanding, and who in his strong manhood had been inspired to write, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12), in later years departed so far from purity as to countenance licentious, revolting rites connected with the worship of Chemosh and Ashtoreth. He who at the dedication of the temple had said to his people, "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God" (1 Kings 8:61), became himself an offender, in heart and life denying his own words. He mistook license for liberty. He tried—but

at what cost!—to unite light with darkness, good with evil, purity with impurity, Christ with Belial." – Prophets and Kings, Page 57.2, Ellen G. White.

Whatever course you pursue, there will always be results or consequences. If you do right, you are assured of blessings; if you do wrong, you are assured of penalties. Solomon thought through his great wisdom that he could do the impossible: uniting light with darkness. Light and darkness can never mix. They are distinct, opposite and separate. Solomon thought that by marrying foreign wives, he could convert them.

Ellen G. White, in her book Prophets and Kings, Page 53.2, says, "From a human point of view, this marriage, though contrary to the teachings of God's law, seemed to prove a blessing; for Solomon's heathen wife was converted and united with him in the worship of the true God. Furthermore, Pharaoh rendered signal service to Israel by taking Gezer, slaying "the Canaanites that dwelt in the city," and giving it "for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife." 1 Kings 9:16. This city Solomon rebuilt and thus apparently greatly strengthened his kingdom along the Mediterranean seacoast. But in forming an alliance with a heathen nation, and sealing the compact by marriage with an idolatrous princess, Solomon rashly disregarded the wise provision that God had made for maintaining the purity of His people. The hope that his Egyptian wife might be converted was but a feeble excuse for the sin."

"From being one of the greatest kings that ever wielded a scepter, Solomon became a profligate, the tool and slave of others. His character, once noble and manly, became enervated and effeminate. His faith in the living God was supplanted by atheistic doubts. Unbelief marred his happiness, weakened his principles, and degraded his life. The justice and magnanimity of his early reign were changed to despotism and tyranny. Poor, frail human nature! God can do little for men who lose their sense of dependence upon Him." – Prophets and Kings, Page 58.1, Ellen G. White.

Unbelief causes great harm to our lives. It deprives us of joy, and it degrades our lives. Believing in God gives us a calm spirit even when the life storms are raging. One can seem to succeed from unrighteousness, but such success does not bring joy. The wicked may be smiling and laughing but smiling and laughing is not always a true depiction of happiness. Some smile to cover the stress and pressure that they are undergoing through their poor decisions.

God has ordained us to be a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), but like Solomon, sin causes us to be tools and slaves of others. It is dangerous to be under the control of the fear of men. Such are the ways of death. Therefore, do not fail to spread the gospel because you fear what others will think of you. Do not fear to talk about the Sabbath because most of the Christian community does not follow it. Do not fear answering an altar call because you fear what the person next to you will think of you. If you want God to bestow immeasurable blessings in your life, always depend on Him.

“Fear Grieves the Holy Spirit—Faith takes God at His Word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come. But there are many who have little faith. They are always fearing and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded by the tokens of God's love, every day they enjoy the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these blessings. And the difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, separate them from Him, by arousing unrest and repining.... Jesus is their Friend. All heaven is interested in their welfare, and their fear and repining grieve the Holy Spirit. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust His promises. When we come to Him in faith, we should believe that every petition enters into the heart of Christ. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be sent when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceeding abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory", and "the working of His mighty power."—Gospel Workers, 261, 262 (1915), Ellen G. White.

When Eve sinned and chose to follow the Devil's word, she was surrounded by the evidence of God's Word. The Serpent that talked to her was created by the Word of God, and the tree which the Serpent was on resulted from God's Word. The land she was standing on was made by the Word of God. There was proof everywhere of the power of God and no proof of the power of the Devil. She had every reason to trust God and no reason to trust the Devil.

The same applies to us. We have every reason to trust God, but we choose to trust Satan. We choose to obey Satan rather than God. The deceiver who never gives us any evidence to trust him probably laughs at our foolishness, for he has been able to convince us with no evidence. Solomon had seen God giving him all the blessings he possessed. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 1:15 that

silver and gold were like common stones in Solomon's time. We can see in 1 Kings 3:11-14 that God gave him all those things.

“Faith Grows in Conflict With Doubt and Fear—The Lord frequently places us in difficult positions to stimulate us to greater exertion. In His providence special annoyances sometimes occur to test our patience and faith. God gives us lessons of trust. He would teach us where to look for help and strength in time of need. Thus we obtain practical knowledge of His divine will, which we so much need in our life experience. Faith grows strong in earnest conflict with doubt and fear.” -Testimonies for the Church 4:116, 117 (1876), Ellen G. White.

Faith and fear can never abide in the same house. They can never walk or cycle or drive on the same road. When faith takes a right turn, fear takes a left, and when faith goes up, fear goes down. They may start with the same alphabetical letter, 'f,' but faith depicts strength while fear depicts weakness. The way faith comes before fear, in the dictionary, is the same way faith should come before fear in our lives. A step of faith, especially when it's dark, is highly essential because we are the light of the world. The dark world needs more men of faith who will stand at all corners and light up the entire world.

“Distrusting God They Have a Thousand Fears—Many neglect to lay up for themselves a treasure in heaven by doing good with the means that God has lent them. They distrust God and have a thousand fears in regard to the future. Like the children of Israel they have evil hearts of unbelief.” –Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 474.2, Ellen G. White.

“So also are the distrustful, professed people of God in this age of unbelief and degeneracy. They fear that they may come to want, or that their children may become needy, or that their grandchildren will be destitute. They dare not trust God. They have no genuine faith in Him who has entrusted them with the blessings and bounties of life, and who has given them talents to use to His glory in advancing His cause.” —Testimonies for the Church 2:656, 657 (1871), Ellen G. White.

The Bible says in Habakkuk 2:4 (KJV) – “The just shall live by his faith." When people know their ways please the Lord, they have nothing to worry about. Fear normally comes when a person knows they have committed a sin. Thieves and armed robbers are always on the lookout for the

police because they know the crimes they have committed. The same applies to drug dealers and other criminals.

Each sin one commits pinches a portion of their self-confidence and self-esteem. If cherished constantly for some time, the person will be deprived of confidence and courage. When you are righteous, you need not be anxious. You may have paid the tithe but are working hard, and your payments from your workplace or clients are delayed. Do not be afraid. God will never leave you nor forsake you. He will surely do something good for you.

“Counseling With Fears Strengthens Them—If we take counsel with our doubts and fears or try to solve everything that we cannot see clearly before we have faith, perplexities will only increase and deepen. But if we come to God, feeling helpless and dependent, as we really are, and in humble, trusting faith make known our wants to Him whose knowledge is infinite, who sees everything in creation and who governs everything by His Will and Word, He can and will attend to our cry and will let light shine into our hearts. Through sincere prayer, we are brought into connection with the mind of the Infinite. We may have no remarkable evidence at the time that the face of our Redeemer is bending over us in compassion and love, but this is even so. We may not feel His visible touch, but His hand is upon us in love and pitying tenderness.” —Steps to Christ, 96, 97 (1892), Ellen G. White.

Psalm 25:14 (KJV) - "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant."

Faith goes hand in hand with the fear of the Lord. Let’s all fear God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for all You have done for me. Help me to always show reverence to You and to walk according to Your will. Please make me have the fear of You before my face, that I sin not. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Please make me acquire knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Write down all instances you have acted in fear of man instead of God and ask God to help you not to repeat them. Also, ask God to help you to always act in fear of Him.

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CHAPTER 29

FAITH IN GOD REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ACTION

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Faith in God requires action that is firm, intentional and immediate,

Whether the situation you are facing is convenient or inconvenient,

To please God, faith is a non-negotiable ingredient,

Love Him, serve Him, always be obedient.

By faith Noah being warned by God of things not seen as yet,

Moved with fear, got saved, and God made his name great,

The discouragements from the heathen did not make him fret,

By faith, we are able to read about him to this date.

Like breaking news, make following God urgent,

For the blood of Jesus Christ is the most powerful detergent,

Let's use God's Word to fight the Devil and his insurgents,

The same Word that created us will make us resurgent.

Like a rocket leaving the launch pad,

We must take immediate righteous action even when it's hard,

For God will never leave us nor forsake us; He will always be with us through every test,

He will give us peace in times of distress.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Noah took immediate action when God instructed him to build an ark. He moved with fear even though he had never seen water drizzling from the sky on earth, leave alone a flood. He understood that the fact that he has not seen it does not mean it cannot happen.

Having lived in the world for about six centuries, he had experienced many things but had never experienced water dropping from the sky. It was difficult to fathom how the flood would happen because they had never seen the waters go beyond their boundaries.

Because of these reasons, many did not believe. They placed their belief in past and present experiences instead of believing in God, who created the past, present and future. They did not realize that each day is a new day and new things always unfold.

For example, today can never be precisely the same as yesterday, and tomorrow can never be exactly the same as today. That is why we have different dates. If today is 6th June 2023, there can never be another date like that. The antediluvians could not comprehend this because they had sunk deep in sin, and a sinful mind is not sound. Sin brings confusion, deprives one of acquiring helpful knowledge, tampers comprehension, and weakens memory. Noah took immediate action, but his neighbours and other world citizens didn't.

Matthew 24:37-39 (KJV) – "[37] But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, [39] And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Some people probably believed what Noah was saying was true, but they thought they had a long time to decide to follow God. Therefore, they spent their time eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, among other activities that they thought were more essential than giving their lives to Christ.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV) says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." The whole duty of a human being is

to fear God and keep His commandments. Therefore, when conducting all activities, we should do them to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If the people before the flood knew this, they would have acted immediately, and God would not destroy them.

Time waits for no man, and immediate action is required when someone has heard the message and is convicted. Many young people have dedicated their lives to frivolity and say they will serve God when they age. Such assume that they have a long life to live, but in reality, we are not assured of the next second in our lives, leave alone the following year. This leads to inadequate or no preparation like the foolish virgins caught unaware when their lamps went off.

Many people have let opportunities slide because of a lack of preparation. The lack of preparation is majorly caused by procrastination. It is like how you begin a new semester in school and think you have all the time to study for the mid or end-of-semester exams. Before you know it, you have one week to take exams and try to grasp the material for the whole semester in that one week. The Kingdom of God works the same way. We should take each day as an opportunity to move closer to Christ.

“Many at first appeared to receive the warning; yet they did not turn to God with true repentance. They were unwilling to renounce their sins. During the time that elapsed before the coming of the Flood, their faith was tested, and they failed to endure the trial. Overcome by the prevailing unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message. Some were deeply convicted, and would have heeded the words of warning; but there were so many to jest and ridicule, that they partook of the same spirit, resisted the invitations of mercy, and were soon among the boldest and most defiant scoffers; for none are so reckless and go to such lengths in sin as do those who have once had light, but have resisted the convicting Spirit of God.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 95.2, Ellen G. White.

The Devil is not always looking forward for you to entirely reject the Good News. He is looking on for you to your delay in making a decision. He knows you will feel guilty in dismissing the gospel because it gives one no reason to reject it. Therefore, he waits for you to delay even for one second so that he can take advantage of that single second to destroy you or to lead you to destruction since "the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10, KJV)."

You may listen to a sermon on Saturday, get convicted, and decide to follow God on Sunday/the next day. Immediately after church service, your friends call you and engage you in an ungodly activity on Sunday. Therefore, you end up not giving your life to Christ as you had planned.

Since sin builds up, the Devil takes that chance to present you with more admirable opportunities for sin that will make you sink deeper than you had before. The demons around you will act with more power and vigor than before because they don't want you to reconsider that decision of following Christ. If you had acted immediately to the conviction, God would have made way for you to live righteously.

You may have made plans to engage in sin in the future, but God does something to cancel those plans. Since He has given you freedom of choice, He will not do that if you have chosen to follow the Devil. However, if you have chosen to follow Him, He will try His best to make it possible for you to follow Him. The Devil may take advantage of your choice to delay to preoccupy you with other 'essential' things like career, education, marriage etc.

Many have been convicted that Saturday is the true Sabbath but have delayed making a decision. As a result, the Devil comes in with more workload and family responsibilities, including significant family events. Thus, they don't follow it and are at risk of losing eternity because they know the truth. God will not pass judgement on sins of ignorance. He judges those who know what is right but don't do it.

Many don't find time for God because they are busy with their studies, careers, or families. Like in the days of Noah, such are at risk of losing their lives. To prevail in this relentless battle between righteousness and evil, light and darkness, immediate action to follow Christ is non-negotiable. It is a choice that must be made no matter the cost. He calls us to love one another, forgive, be kind, and show mercy and grace, even when we don't feel inclined. He calls us to put others before ourselves, serve with a humble heart, and trust in Him completely, even when life falls apart.

Luke 19:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. [2] And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. [3] And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. [4] And he ran before and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see Him: for he was to pass that way."

When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to his town, he ran and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus because he was short. Running to climb the sycamore tree showed that he took immediate action. Not only did he take immediate action, but he also took fast action (running). The Bible says he was chief among the publicans. In those days, the publicans (tax collectors) were thieves, and they took more tax than was required. Thus the Jews hated them.

Zacchaeus was chief of the publicans. In other words, he was chief among the thieves. To say it differently, he was a greater thief than the others. He probably took more from the people than the other publicans. Despite his sinful nature, he understood the value of Jesus. Even though he was richer than Jesus (when Jesus lived on this earth) in terms of material possession, he believed that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew that Jesus could offer him something his money could not buy even though he was rich, which was salvation.

Zacchaeus understanding of the value of salvation made him take quick action. He prepared early before Jesus arrived by climbing the sycamore tree. This was an act of faith. This action caused Jesus to see him when he looked up. If he had not climbed that tree, Jesus may not have seen him because he would have been covered by the crowd, especially since he was little in physical stature. Climbing up the sycamore tree gave him a clearer view than the rest of the people since he was on a higher level than the rest.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6 that God is a rewarder of those who, through faith, diligently seek Him. Jesus saw the act of faith from Zacchaeus, how he took immediate action and made a great effort to see Him, and rewarded him immediately. God wants to save everybody, but at the same time, God cannot force anybody. He will give you opportunities to go to Him, but He cannot force you.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:11 (KJV) – "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

Time and chance happen to us all. As long as you are alive, there is time and an opportunity to change your ways and do what is right. As the race is not for the fastest runner or the battle for the strongest fighter, Zacchaeus was not the tallest in the land (he might have been the shortest), but he did not allow his height to be a hindrance to encountering Jesus. By climbing a tall sycamore

tree, he rose above his obstacles. He might have been three or four feet tall, but climbing onto a sycamore tree made him over 90 feet tall since sycamore trees are usually between 90 to 131 feet tall.

Oh! How great we will rise in various aspects of our lives if we properly utilize all the elements of our physical environment. God created the natural environment for our benefit. If we unite with Him, He will show us how to use our current situation and environment for the greatest good to us and our fellow men. If we don't unite with God and consult Him on the excellent use of our environment, we will engage in acts to destroy the environment just to get a few coins which may seem like a lot to our puny minds.

Luke 19:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. [6] And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." Zacchaeus acted immediately on Jesus' commands. He neither argued with Jesus nor questioned Him. He did not ask Him the reason behind His instructions. By faith, he acted immediately, and as a result, he received the gift of salvation.

“The chief among the publicans,” Zacchaeus, was a Jew, and detested by his countrymen. His rank and wealth were the reward of a calling they abhorred, and which was regarded as another name for injustice and extortion. Yet the wealthy customs officer was not altogether the hardened man of the world that he seemed. Beneath the appearance of worldliness and pride was a heart susceptible to divine influences. Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus. The report of One who had borne Himself with kindness and courtesy toward the proscribed classes had spread far and wide. In this chief of the publicans was awakened a longing for a better life. Only a few miles from Jericho, John the Baptist had preached at the Jordan, and Zacchaeus had heard of the call to repentance. The instruction to the publicans, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you” (Luke 3:13), though outwardly disregarded, had impressed his mind. He knew the Scriptures, and was convicted that his practice was wrong. Now, hearing the words reported to have come from the Great Teacher, he felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God. Yet what he had heard of Jesus kindled hope in his heart. Repentance, reformation of life, was possible, even to him; was not one of the new Teacher's most trusted disciples a publican? Zacchaeus began at once to follow the conviction that had taken

hold upon him, and to make restitution to those whom he had wronged." – Desire of Ages, Page 552.4, Ellen G. White.

Luke 9:59-60 (KJV) – "[59] And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. [60] Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

When Jesus called that person, He knew that the person might have other things to do. However, saying yes to following Jesus and being available to serve Him is more important than what you consider essential.

Friends and family members may leave you, and sometimes they may do it without wanting to. For example, they can move to another city or country or even die. God is a friend and a family member who can never leave you because God can't die, and God is omnipresent. He is always there with you and for you.

God is the only being you can rely on because nothing can happen to Him. Therefore, when God calls you to serve him, leave everything you are doing and rush to His call.

Zacchaeus did not know that Jesus would ask him to come to his place, but when Jesus requested him, he welcomed Jesus immediately and joyfully. Like most of us, he did not care whether his house was prepared. He did not care if his house was in perfect condition to invite God into it. He just invited Him.

Through the worry of how our homes look like, many of us have missed innumerable blessings by failing to welcome servants of God. On the contrary, many have gained blessings by welcoming servants of God. Your television set may not be the largest and the most advanced, and you may not have the most expensive furniture, but that should not make you shy off from inviting people for fellowship.

Jesus expects you to follow Him immediately. He expects you to invite Him to your heart immediately. Jesus wanted the man to follow Him immediately, so He told him to let the dead bury their dead. Jesus may call you when you have a vital family function, like the wedding of a brother, sister or child. He may call you when you have a family get-together meeting where there will be lots of feasting and making merry. When He calls us in such times, we need to answer

immediately to His call. He knows that it may be difficult, but His grace is sufficient and will enable us to do what we find impossible.

Every time Jesus calls you to do something, there is always a blessing underneath that call of service. Some of the blessings you may experience immediately. While some you may encounter after some days, months or years. Some may be preserved for future generations after you are long gone, and some may flow to the promised eternal life.

You may be praying hard and long for something and wonder why God is not answering your prayers. God may have responded to your prayers long ago, but you missed it because you did not say yes to His call. God may have called you to volunteer and do something in the church, and He may use someone you don't respect much as a medium to give you that call. He may call you to do something you don't like, or you think you are not gifted in the way he called Moses to speak, and Moses thought he couldn't do it because he felt he was not blessed in speech.

When God calls us, we must be humble and do what He has told us to do immediately. The man who delayed following Jesus would have significantly impacted the spreading of the gospel if he had agreed immediately. If the people at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2) had not filled the water pots with water, they would not have received the wine they wanted.

Jesus might have delayed changing the water into wine if they had delayed. Also, if they had delayed, Jesus may not have changed the water to wine because He would have probably gone for another mission since He had other things to do. Jesus being God, would have given them wine without requiring them to fill the water pots with water, but He needed to ensure that they had faith, that they genuinely believed He could perform that miracle. Disobedience and delay portray a lack of faith.

Luke 9:61-62 (KJV) – "[61] And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. [62] And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Here the person that Jesus told to follow Him did not directly reject the call of Jesus. When Jesus told him to follow Him, he answered and said that he would follow God after he had bid farewell to the people at his house. Bidding farewell to the people at your house is good, but following Jesus first is the best thing. The man agreed with the message that Jesus had preached, but

something in his heart was still stubborn and causing him to delay. Like Lot's wife, he was looking back at what he had left behind: his family.

Many people will be lost because of putting family and friends ahead of God. The Holy Spirit has convicted you to stop armed robbery, but you are worried about your friends or gang members still in the crime. If you go and consult with them first before you follow God, they probably won't encourage you. They may discourage you more, and you may question your beliefs. Jesus understood this that is why He told the man not to delay.

The Devil never sleeps; he will use that short delay to the best of his advantage. When you wake up in the morning, get out of bed immediately and pray, don't delay. The Devil may use that delay to give you evil thoughts or to make you start doing other things like looking at your phone, which may make your whole day disoriented. "Your last thought at night, your first thought in the morning, should be of Him in whom is centered your hope of eternal life." – Our High Calling, Page 116.2, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 2:13-14 (NKJV) – "[13] Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." [14] When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt." Joseph rose immediately from his sleep when the angel appeared to him. He considered the call of God to be more critical than his sweet sleep. By doing that, he enabled himself and his family to escape the danger ahead.

"In like manner, Joseph received warning to flee into Egypt with Mary and the child. And the angel said, "Be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him." Joseph obeyed without delay, setting out on the journey by night for greater security." – Desire of Ages, Page 64.2, Ellen G. White.

Luke 15:17-20 (KJV) – "[17] "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! [18] I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, [19] and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." [20] "And he arose and came to his father."

The prodigal son gladly enjoyed the swine's meal that he was given (Luke 15:16), he did not consider himself worthy of having better food than that. When he came to his right senses, he reasoned how terrible a mistake he had made by fleeing far from his father's house. He reasoned that he would get better when he was in his father's house because even the hired servants there had more than enough food while he remained hungry. He decided to go back to his father's house, and he acted immediately on that decision. His father did not chase him away nor treat him with contempt because of what he had done. Instead, he received him with love.

Many once-devoted Christians may fear returning to God because they are uncertain if God will accept them. God will always accept you back, no matter the magnitude of sin you have committed. God will always accept you back because He wants to save everybody.

Zechariah 1:3 (KJV) – "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

Once you have decided to return to God, don't look back to the world. You may be a secular musician who was so blessed while singing gospel music, and when you prosper, you switch lanes and get into secular music. When in secular music, you succeed for a while because the pleasures of sin last only for a season. It reaches a point where everything in your life starts going down. The favour you once had from God starts decreasing; blessings diminish, and curses increase. Do not fear returning to God because you fear what people will say or think. Return to Him immediately, and He will return to you immediately.

Faith requires immediate action. We must act with courage and strength to make sure that right will win at length. So let us take immediate action to follow God's way; let us put aside our doubts and fears and trust in Him today.

2 Samuel 12:7-13 (KJV) – "[7] And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; [8] And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. [9] Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. [10] Now therefore the sword shall never

depart from thine house; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. [11] Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. [12] For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. [13] And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

When Prophet Nathan told David about his sin, David confessed immediately and repented. He did not argue with the prophet. He did not try to justify himself. He repented immediately. He acknowledged that he had sinned against the Lord and saw his sin's magnitude. Many repent out of fear of the consequences that will come with that sin, but they don't see the magnitude of the evil they have committed.

Sin is so dangerous that it can affect so many people than you have imagined, and it can also affect people who are miles away without the sinner knowing. David fasted and prayed, seeking for forgiveness from God and for God to spare the son he bore with Uriah's wife. God forgave him but did not spare the life of that son. God blessed David so much, and David was called a man after God's heart.

“The prophet's rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity. His soul was bowed in penitence before God. With trembling lips he said, “I have sinned against the Lord.” All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 722.1, Ellen G. White.

When the people of Nineveh heard of their sin and the punishment that God wanted to give them, they humbled themselves immediately and sincerely repented. Leading by example, the King put on sackcloth, sat in ashes, and proclaimed a fast all over the land of Nineveh. This action moved God, and He relented from the disaster that He wanted to bring upon them. Once convicted of a particular sin, the immediate action of repentance can make God turn away from punishing you. They did not argue with Jonah or try to harm or kill him. They repented immediately.

"As king and nobles, with the common people, the high and the low, "repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matthew 12:41) and united in crying to the God of heaven, His mercy was granted them. He "saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." Jonah 3:10. Their doom was averted, the God of Israel was exalted and honored throughout the heathen world, and His law was revered." – Prophets and Kings, Page 270.4, Ellen G. White.

Jonah 3:4-10 (NKJV) – "[4] And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" [5] So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. [6] Then word came to the King of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. [7] And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the King and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. [8] But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. [9] Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? [10] Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."

2 Kings 22:11 (KJV) – "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes."

King Josiah did what was right in the sight of God since he began ruling (2 Kings 22:2). However, it was until he discovered the book of the law that he got acquainted with the entire truth. He can be likened to those genuine Christians who strive to please God even though they are unaware of the truth. Whatever they know, they do it excellently. Such are counted better in the eyes of God than those who know the complete truth and don't practice it.

Many professed Sabbath-believing Christians know the Seventh day is the Sabbath but don't value it. Other Christians don't know about the Sabbath, but once they come to the knowledge and understanding of the commandment, they obey it with all their heart.

When King Josiah heard the words of the book of the law, he rented his clothes immediately. He carried out reforms over all of Judah; such that was never seen. He did not follow the ways of his father, Amon and his grandfather Manasseh. He sought to do righteousness just like his grandfather King Hezekiah.

The book of the law that King Josiah found was written to guide human beings on how to live their lives. Following its principles assured an individual and a nation of prosperity.

“It was the observance of the statutes recorded by Moses, especially those given in the book of the covenant, which forms a part of Deuteronomy that had made the reign of Hezekiah so prosperous. But Manasseh had dared set aside these statutes; and during his reign the temple copy of the book of the law, through careless neglect, had become lost. Thus for many years the people generally were deprived of its instruction.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 392.2, Ellen G. White.

“The king must leave with God the events of the future; he could not alter the eternal decrees of Jehovah. But in announcing the retributive judgments of Heaven, the Lord had not withdrawn opportunity for repentance and reformation; and Josiah, discerning in this a willingness on the part of God to temper His judgments with mercy, determined to do all in his power to bring about decided reforms. He arranged at once for a great convocation, to which were invited the elders and magistrates in Jerusalem and Judah, together with the common people. These, with the priests and Levites, met the king in the court of the temple.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 400.1, Ellen G. White.

“In the reformation that followed, the king turned his attention to the destruction of every vestige of idolatry that remained. So long had the inhabitants of the land followed the customs of the surrounding nations in bowing down to images of wood and stone, that it seemed almost beyond the power of man to remove every trace of these evils. But Josiah persevered in his effort to cleanse the land. Sternly he met idolatry by slaying “all the priests of the high places;” “moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 401.1, Ellen G. White.

Josiah made reforms in Judah immediately. The people of Judah had sunk in idolatry for several years, but Josiah didn't consider that a hindrance. The reformation he led was not slow to

accommodate unbelievers or to give them time to embrace the message. He did all the necessary reforms immediately.

Once they learn something is wrong, some people stop it immediately, while others resolve to stop it step by step. If they smoke ten cigarettes daily, they reduce them to five. God's infinite grace enables you to stop your most difficult sin all at once, just like King Josiah did. Doing that requires a firm and solemn decision to stop that sin and live righteously. And the best time to make that decision is now, not even one second later. "Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life."— Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment.

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." – Martin Luther King Jr. Faith is not a passive acceptance of what is, but an active pursuit of what could be. Don't just talk about having faith; put it into practice. Let us take action today, and show the world what faith can say. Let us be brave and never fear, for faith requires immediate action here. So let us take immediate action to follow God's will. Let us trust in Him completely and do His bidding still. For He has promised great blessings if we obey His call, and if we do so faithfully, He'll never let us fall.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to take immediate action to do what you have told me to and to stop doing what you have told me not to do. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List the things God has told you to do that and pray over them.
2. List the things God has told you to stop doing and pray over them.

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CHAPTER 30

THOU SHALT NOT PROCRASTINATE

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Procrastination, the foe unseen,

Rise, dear soul, in faith serene,

Procrastination, a deadly virus, a deadly sin,

Faith is immediate obedience to the Highest King.

Like David with stones, face your Goliath,

Embrace every trial, let your spirit be pliant,

Forge through the complex maze, never fear the giant,

Nothing is impossible when God's Word you are compliant.

In the crucible of challenges, faith takes flight,

A soaring spirit, resilient, bold, and bright,

With courage as wings, against the darkest night,

Navigate the storms, let your faith be your might.

On the canvas of dreams, let your hopes ignite,

Embrace the unknown with unwavering sight.

Through valleys of doubt, let your faith ignite,

A beacon of strength, an eternal light.

Decisions, a river, winding and wide,

Navigate wisely, and let the Spirit be your guide.

In God's Divine Word, find wisdom's embrace,

Make choices to put a smile on the Creator's face.

Self-esteem, a garden, tend it with care,

Blossom with love, dispel every snare.

Self-esteem, a house, build with stone,

For you are fearfully made, in God's image alone.

Consistency, an anthem, rhythm in your stride,

Dance with discipline, let commitment be your guide.

A melody of purpose, in harmony with fate,

Compose a life symphony, no need to hesitate.

Focus, a compass, pointing true north,

In the labyrinth of distraction, courage goes forth.

Eyes on the prize, let your vision be clear,

For in faith, there's no room for doubt or fear.

Don't wait for the last minute, a perilous game,

In the storm of urgency, you risk being put to shame,

Like Noah taking time to build an ark before the rain,

Act now, not later, and your efforts won't go down the drain.

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What is procrastination?

Procrastination is the act of delaying or postponing something.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

God warned Noah of future things. As a result, He moved with fear, meaning he started building the ark immediately. He did not wait for the right time to start, nor was he stopped by the mocking and insults he received from people.

Many people have had a conviction from the Holy Spirit to get saved. Instead of acting on their conviction immediately, they procrastinate. As a result, they find themselves in a worse state than they were since they become easy prey for the devil.

When Noah was building the ark, he made it for 120 years, adding something daily until the ark was complete. This principle applies in every aspect of our lives, spiritual, mental, financial, and physical. No one is born as an adult. Everyone is born as a child, and as they grow, they continue developing.

Let's focus on the phrase 'moved with fear. Noah was warned by God of things not yet seen, and as a result of the fear of God, he started working immediately. Had he delayed a single bit, the floods would have caught up with him and destroyed him.

God might have given you an incredible business idea, but instead of moving with fear like Noah, you are waiting to get the capital to start. Or you are waiting to get networks, or you are waiting for the right time. After a short while, God takes that idea and gives it to someone else because God's purpose must be fulfilled.

Some reasons why people procrastinate

Perfectionism

Some people are perfectionists. Sometimes this is a desirable characteristic since we should all aim for high standards, especially as people created in God's image. Perfection is an impressive goal, but we must accept that we live in an imperfect world (because of sin), and there is no day everything will be perfect.

We should always do things excellently. Excellence is a Biblical principle. The Bible says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10). However, as much as we must do our best, we should realize that our best may not always be the best. We should accept that there are people who will do things better than us.

Secondly, what is the best now will not be the best in the future because new things keep coming up. The best vehicles or airplanes in the 1960s are not the best now because there are better ones that have come up that are improved in speed, stability, safety, and comfort, among other facets.

Excellence should not be confused with perfection. The slogan of Mercedes Benz is 'The best or nothing. This is a slogan for excellence, not perfection. Excellence is doing the best you can do at a particular time. Perfection is having no mistakes at all.

Mercedes Benz strives for excellence, not perfection. If the company had waited to create a perfect car to sell to the market, they would still be waiting till now. Mercedes Benz Company started in 1926, almost a century ago. Since that time, they have been improving their models each year.

The vehicles they manufactured in 1926 could serve people at that time, and the cars they manufactured in 2022 could serve people at this time. They would have missed a whole century of serving people if they had waited till 2022 to create a digitally controlled, high-speed, safe, and highly luxurious vehicle.

The Mercedes we see now as highly advanced as we perceive it to be is not yet perfect. It is still far from perfect. Perfect means it should have the best shape everybody loves, move faster than the speed of light (299,792.458 kilometers per second), and be highly safe so that when you are inside it, you can be sure that death is impossible. It would have taken them millennials to attain this standard, and they still would not be able to achieve it.

However, they chose to progress with excellence, not perfection. Progress with excellence means you do the best you can at the moment and keep on improving with time, optimizing the current resources that you have maximumly.

In Exodus 4:1, Moses complained that the Israelites might not believe him and asked God what he could do to make them believe him. In Exodus 4:2, God asked Moses what was in his hand. God didn't send Moses to get a solution that was far away. He used the rod that was in Moses' hand. In other words, He used what Moses already had.

Therefore, your resources are adequate to take you to the next level. Once you reach the next level, you will have gained other resources to take you to an upper level. This process should be continuous with your consistent efforts. This is the concept of the ladder of success. This is the concept of progress. Aim for progress, not perfection.

After Moses used his rod, Pharaoh was amazed, but still, he would not let the Israelites go. Through Moses, God brought plague after plague, the next plague being worse than the preceding one, and finally, Pharaoh let them go.

Through your progressive efforts, God will make your succeeding fruits better and more than the preceding ones. Likewise, the challenges you face will get worse as you go up the ladder than the ones you face while down the ladder, but the fruits will surely be worth it. God did not create the world in one day. He made it in 6 days, and the crowning of His creation, or rather the flagship of His creation, man, was created on the sixth/last day.

Day by day, God kept improving until the creation work was complete. After Adam sinned, God had already devised the plan of redemption (He had developed it before creation), but He did not execute it immediately after Adam sinned. He had to send prophets for thousands of years before sending Jesus to die on the cross.

God is a God who loves and respects the necessary processes required to accomplish goals. Therefore, for those created in His image, we must respect the process—progress before perfection.

"If we make the best use of our talents, the Spirit of God will continually lead us to greater efficiency. To the man who had faithfully traded with his talents thee Lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The one-talented man was also expected to do his best. Had he traded with his lord's goods, the Lord would have multiplied the talent." – Messages to Young People, Page 300.4, Ellen G. White.

Sometimes the aim of perfection is brought about by fear of failure. Sometimes we fear failure because we fear being criticized or ridiculed. When we give ourselves entirely to God and follow His direction in our work, we should not be afraid to fail because it is impossible to fail with God.

What does the pen of inspiration talk about failure? “Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One who knows no failure.” – Messages to Young People, Page 309.3, Ellen G. White.

“We have little idea of the strength that would be ours if we would connect with the source of all strength. We fall into sin again and again, and think it must always be so. We cling to our infirmities as if they were something to be proud of. Christ tells us that we must set our face as a flint if we would overcome. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree; and through the power He has given us, we may resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then let us not talk of our weakness and inefficiency, but of Christ and His strength. When we talk of Satan's strength, the enemy fastens his power more firmly upon us. When we talk of the power of the Mighty One, the enemy is driven back. As we draw near to God, He draws near to us....” – Messages to Young People, Page 105.1, Ellen G. White.

When we corporate with God, we can be sure that all our righteous efforts will be fruitful. Sometimes we may think we are failing but remember Romans 8:28 says that all things work out

together for good for those who love God. Each item may not be good, but when combined with various others, they work together for good.

For example, when traveling on the road, you may encounter rough roads, but the presence of rough roads does not mean you won't arrive at your destination. Also, when traveling on the road, you may encounter a situation that causes you to delay, only to realize there is something ahead that God is saving you from. Therefore, that which seemed bad was used by God to work out for good.

In one of his YouTube stories titled 'God's son, Abel Mutua talks about a man named Maxwell from Kenya who was saved from a sinking ferry in Mombasa, Kenya, in 1994 because he was one minute late to board it. The delay (which seemed terrible at first) saved him from dying.

The same man was saved from being a victim of the August 7th, 1998, Nairobi, Kenya Bomb blast because he had forgotten the paper on which he had written his account number. He was inside Cooperative Bank to pay for his brother's school fees. At that time, mobile phones were not common in Kenya. Therefore, he had to get out of the bank to search for a community phone booth to call his mother to give him his brother's school account number.

When he had just arrived at the phone booth, he heard a bomb blast that blasted the American Embassy and destroyed the buildings next to it, such as Cooperative Bank (the bank he was in). If he had carried the paper with the account number, he would have been a victim of that bomb blast. Each thing may not be good, but all things work out for good. Therefore, as children of God, we should not fear failure.

When Jesus died on the cross in the eyes of critics, He had failed. Various people mocked Him while He was at the cross. Some told Him to save Himself if He was God's son.

Philippians 2:8-10 (KJV) – "[8] And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. [9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"

We see in Philippians 2:8, that Jesus was humble even to the most humiliating and painful death and as a result, He rose again with victory and was given a name above every name. What seemed

like failure was not failure; it was a steppingstone to success. It resulted in success for Him and the whole human race.

You may have a business idea that may seem like it's not working. Be persistent in it. Along the journey, you may realize that God has used that failure to build your networks and experience, which later may convert to money. God may have used that failing experience to boost your spiritual growth, making you a better individual to conduct that business.

After you have developed the spiritual muscles necessary to run that business, God ends up bestowing enormous resources upon it because He knows you can handle them. There is also a possibility that God may use that failing experience to lead you to a better and more profitable idea. God may also use that failing experience to enable you to discover your full potential.

Therefore, do not procrastinate because you are waiting for things to be perfect. You can never attain perfection, but you can achieve progress.

"The Perfection Gap — "I Have to Find the Best Way Before I Start." Similar to the Mistake Gap is the Perfection Gap, the desire to find the "best" way to get started in a growth plan. When Curt presented me with the idea of a growth plan, I went looking for the best way. But what I discovered is that I had it backward. I had to get started if I wanted to find the best way. It’s similar to driving on an unfamiliar road at night. Ideally, you’d like to be able to see your whole route before you begin. But you see it progressively. As you move forward, a little more of the road is revealed to you. If you want to see more of the way, then get moving.” – The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth, John C. Maxwell.

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Avoidance

Some people avoid specific tasks in their line of duty because they find them boring or unpleasant. In whatever cause you embark on, there will be an exciting and an extremely uninteresting task. When you choose to study Medicine, accounting, engineering, law, theology, etc., there will always be a course/unit that is interesting and one that is boring.

While working as a lawyer, you may find going to court to defend a client interesting while preparing a one-hundred-page legal document boring. When working as an author or blogger, you may find writing interesting but researching and editing boring. However, whether the task is tedious or exciting, you must do it, and you must do it excellently.

We would eliminate all the tedious tasks and be left with the interesting ones, but that would not lead to desired results. We must combine boring and exciting tasks to form complete results, like a rim on a wheel. You may find cooking to be exciting but washing dishes bland. If you choose to cook and not wash dishes, you will eat on dirty dishes. If you decide to perform well in English and fail in Mathematics because you don't like it, it will bring your grades down.

God sent the prophet Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1). Jonah decided to avoid going to Nineveh. He decided to run away from God and thought that he would live comfortably when he was away from God. He did not know that it was impossible to escape God since God is everywhere.

Psalm 95:4-5 (KJV) – “[4] In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. [5] The sea is His, and he made it: and His hands formed the dry land.”

God has the whole world in His hands. Jonah took a ship that was headed to Tarshish. God sent a great wind on the sea and an extremely violent storm that the ship threatened to break. Jonah requested to be thrown into the sea, and after he was thrown, he got swallowed by a giant fish and was inside it for three days and three nights (Jonah 1:17).

After the fish vomited Jonah, God sent him to Nineveh again (Jonah 3:1). Jonah had no other option but to go. Avoiding God's call in the first place brought him more trouble than he had expected. It brought him more problems than He would have had had he decided to obey God immediately.

When we avoid following God's purpose for us in our lives, we end up encountering more problems than the problems we would have experienced if we had embarked on God's divine purpose.

God might have given you an idea to write a book, but you avoid it because you fear the process. That book you avoid writing may be God's way of giving you a substantial financial breakthrough. You would have sacrificed one month to write a book, but you choose not to, and you end up facing years of poverty.

You may fear marketing your business to the target market because you fear rejection. You need to understand that you can't be accepted by everybody and you can't be rejected by everybody. Some will agree with you, and others will not.

The fact that some don't agree with you does not mean you are doing the wrong thing. Jesus was always doing the right thing, but He could not get the church to agree with Him. The people in the church were the ones who shouted, “Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21).

If Jesus had avoided embarking on His mission because of opposition, the work of salvation would not have happened. It would be null and void like the Supreme Court’s declaration of Kenya’s 2017 first presidential election.

Avoiding necessary tasks may make you comfortable for a short while but will make you uncomfortable for a long time or a lifetime. What you should avoid is delaying the purpose God has called you for. God has designed us so that if He gives us a particular idea and we fail to work

on it, it keeps haunting us in our minds. Therefore, if we want peace of mind, we should promptly work on our ideas and purposes.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (KJV) – "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Whatever our hand finds to do, we need to do it with our full strength. The Bible says whatsoever. It doesn't say the things we like or are passionate about.

Therefore, when given a particular task or a project, we need to do both the interesting and uninteresting parts wholeheartedly. This conduct is what will differentiate us from the rest of the crowd. If we do that, our work will produce an output of supreme quality because many people only do the things they like with their strength.

One way to have passion while doing all essential activities in our scope of work is to have a cheerful attitude when conducting them. The best way we can do this is to look for God in everything we do. God created the whole universe, meaning in everything you interact with except sin, you will always find God in the midst of it.

The Bible is the foundation of all knowledge. It should apply to all righteous duties we conduct, including those in our various careers. Therefore, the Bible should be at the top of our minds. When we do this, the finite mind connects with infinite power, and as a result, our minds are strengthened and uplifted, and our actions are elevated to reach heights as high as heaven is from the earth.

Psalm 1:2 says that blessed is the man who delights in the law of God and meditates upon it day and night. When writing this Psalm, the Psalmist understood that we have other tasks to carry out, not just worshipping. However, he compels us to have the Word of God at the top of our minds all the time to guide our activities.

If the Word of God is at the top of your mind, you will have a cheerful attitude when doing everything because the Bible says in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Always means at all times through thick and thin, rain or shine.

Another practical way to ensure we don't avoid tasks is by saving the best for last. This method applies by doing the things we don't like or the most complex things first so we can get done with

them and the things we like last. In God's creation, He loves man most and created Him last. This may only apply to some duties, but it can be an excellent practice to implement wherever it's usable.

Low Self-Esteem

Some people procrastinate due to low self-esteem. They harbor thoughts of not being good enough and others being better than them. They fear making mistakes, and they fear being wrong. As a result, many are comfortable lying on the bed of averageness, covering themselves with the blankets of doing the bare minimum.

People are afraid to showcase their full potential because they are unsure of how they will look in the eyes of others. Others have ideas that may impact the world but procrastinate working on them because they feel they are not smart enough.

God created all of us in various unique ways. In each one, he placed a gift that, if worked upon diligently, will impact their lives and the lives of millions of others. He created us so that we depend upon one another in various aspects of our lives. Therefore, everyone has a unique role to play. “To every man is given his work” – Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

An elected congress member or parliamentarian can only get into his desired office with the voters' support. Likewise, voters can only operate their various trades with policies implemented by their elected representatives. A real estate developer cannot develop houses without people to buy or rent. A patient is dependent upon a doctor for recovery.

A doctor is dependent upon a nurse for assistance with various duties. A student is dependent upon a teacher for knowledge. A president or a king depends on the farmer for the food they eat.

"In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality." – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Once you understand this, you will have no room for low self-esteem because you will know that your contribution to this world is precious.

Some Bible verses can help you to boost your self-esteem. It can help if you recite them daily in the morning and before sleep. They are:

2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV) – "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Psalm 139:14 (KJV) – "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvelous are Thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well."

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) – "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Ephesians 2:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) [6] And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Psalm 18:29 (KJV) – "For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV) – "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Embark on your calling with unwavering confidence. This will prevent delays and procrastination. If you fear doing something, you will never get to know if you are right or wrong. The only way to know if you are right or wrong is to do it. If David had low self-esteem, he wouldn't have killed Goliath.

If David had low self-esteem, he wouldn't have killed the lion and the bear that attacked his flock. If the 4 lepers in 2 Kings Chapter 7 had dwelled on their weakness, they wouldn't have gotten the prize they got. They rose above their disability and thus were able to conquer the city.

Jeremiah 1:5-7 (KJV) – "[5] Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. [6] Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. [7] But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

After Jeremiah told God he could not speak because he was young, God told him not to say He was young. God told Jeremiah not to talk of his inadequacy. When God chooses you to accomplish a mission, He is aware of your weakness. Nevertheless, He does not want you to focus on your weakness. He wants you to focus on Him, who can turn your weaknesses into strengths.

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His Word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do." — Christ's Object Lessons, Page 363, Ellen G. White.

"No Thought of Doubt to See Light of Day—Watch as faithfully as did Abraham lest the ravens or any birds of prey alight upon your sacrifice and offering to God. Every thought of doubt should be so guarded that it will not see the light of day by utterance. Light always flees from words which honor the powers of darkness. The life of our risen Lord should be daily manifested in us." — Letter 7, 1892. (Selected Messages 2:243.), Ellen G. White.

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Waiting Until the Last Minute

This habit is quite common among people who love procrastinating. Typically, when someone assigns a task to a given person, he usually gives them enough time to complete it. The time given is often more than necessary. Someone can give you one week to complete a two-hour task.

However, some people are fond of complaining that they were not given enough time to complete work. Such people are usually the ones who wait till the last minute to do that work. It is a common habit in schools from elementary to university. It is a common habit in the workplace. Some people deliberately do this, stating that they do that because they work best under pressure. The people who wait till the last minute may complete a given task, but they won't do it excellently since they are doing it hurriedly.

Genesis 1 narrates how God created the world. God, who possesses infinite power, did not make the world on the last day. He created the world in six days. He made something different every day. Whatever He created on subsequent days completed whatever He made on the previous days. For example, He created animals and man last.

God created animals and man after creating an environment for them to live in. He created man after creating all trees and plants for man to get food. He made the fish and all sea animals after creating the waters they were to live in. God did not wait till the last minute to do everything. He worked daily till His creation was complete.

Hebrews 11:30 (KJV) – "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." The Israelites went around the walls of Jericho for seven days. They had to go around it day by day. Tasks need to be done one day at a time.

Block some time off to do a specific job and add on it daily. What at first seemed too much to do by continuous progress, it will get less, and finally, it will get completed. The walls of Jericho fell after the seven days were over. They did not fall on the first day; they fell on the seventh day.

If you have been given one week to complete a task, that takes one day. You can take the first day to do it. Then the next days, you can use that time to correct mistakes, research more and add value to it. When the time to submit comes, you will have produced work of a higher quality than was initially expected.

This practice will give you a stunning reputation everywhere you go, either in school, at home, or in your workplace. It will make people trust you more because you will have proven a character of reliability. It will make you different from the rest of the multitude since everyone does only what is expected of them. Few go the extra mile.

Waiting until the last minute to do something is risky. This is because one may underestimate a task to be too little, only to realize that it is a lot and too much to be completed at the last minute.

In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the five foolish virgins were locked out of the banquet because they did not have oil for their lamps. They waited till the last minute to go and look for oil. They did not know when the groom was coming, and thus the delay cost them.

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Trouble in Focusing

Focusing is sometimes a difficult quality to possess among us. We sometimes find it difficult to focus due to the numerous available distractions. In this 21st Century, most of those distractions are from social media.

We have embarked on an important task, but we get distracted when a message pops up on WhatsApp or any other messaging platform. Once that message pops in, we get distracted and start chatting.

Chatting on social media takes too much time that a day can pass without us doing anything. We allow other social media channels to distract us, like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Snapchat, whereby we can scroll for hours just looking at the latest news, trends, or gossip.

Some people have certain physical and psychological disorders, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and usually face difficulty getting a project started.

People with ADHD cannot sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings. They find themselves constantly fidgeting. Such people have difficulty concentrating on tasks. They have a habit of excessive movement, excessive talking, inability to wait for their turn, acting without thinking, and interrupting conversations.

Sometimes ADHD can benefit someone as people with ADHD may be more social and thus more likable with people. However, it can prove disastrous if it always gets in the way of conducting essential activities. Other disorders make it difficult for someone to focus, such as sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, and other learning disabilities.

As we have seen above, focusing is sometimes a mental health or psychological issue. How, then, do we deal with such problems? Many don't believe it, but the best solution to mental health is the Bible. Excessive physical exercise does help sometimes, but spiritual exercise wins over physical exercise at any given time.

1 Timothy 4:8 (KJV) – "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The Bible does not say physical exercise is not beneficial. It says Godliness is more profitable than physical exercise. When physical exercise is combined with Godliness, it will benefit the individual greatly because the Christian's motive in exercising will be the glory of God.

Body exercise is a precious blessing. Proverbs 20:29 says, “The glory of young men is their strength.”

“For a healthy young man, stern, severe exercise is strengthening to the whole system… Without such exercise the mind cannot be kept in working order. It becomes inactive, unable to put forth the sharp, quick action that will give scope to its powers…” – Special Testimonies, Series B 1:28-30, Ellen G. White.

“Action gives power.” – Body exercise increases mental stability and vigor. It will result in a more stable mind when conducted to the glory of God.” - Special Testimonies, Series B 1:29, Ellen G. White.

The pen of inspiration has the following to say about physical exercise:

“The Law of Obedient Action — All the heavenly beings are in constant activity, and the Lord Jesus, in His practical lifework, has given an example for every man. God has established in the heavens the law of obedient action. [Note: The law of obedient action is worthy of careful study. Action not only advances physical health but brings us into harmony with others and with the universe.] Silent but ceaseless, the objects of His creation do their appointed work. The ocean is in constant motion. The springing grass, “which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven,” does its errand, clothing the fields with beauty. The leaves are stirred by the wind, and yet no hand is seen to touch them. The sun, moon, and stars are useful and glorious in fulfilling their appointed mission. And man, his mind and body created in God's own similitude, must be active in order to

fill his appointed place. Man is not to be idle. Idleness is sin.” — Letter 103, 1900 (Special Testimonies, Series B 1:29, 30), Ellen G. White.

“Machinery of Body Must Continue Its Work—Study the Lord's plan in regard to Adam, who was created pure, holy, and healthy. Adam was given something to do. He was to use the organs God had given him. He could not have been idle. His brain must work, not in a mechanical way, like a mere machine. At all times the machinery of the body continues its work; the heart throbs, doing its regular, appointed task like a steam engine, forcing its crimson current unceasingly to all parts of the body. Action, action, is seen pervading the whole living machine. Each organ must do its appointed work. If physical inaction is continued, there will be less and less activity of the brain.” — Mind, Character and Personality, Page 115.2, Ellen G. White.

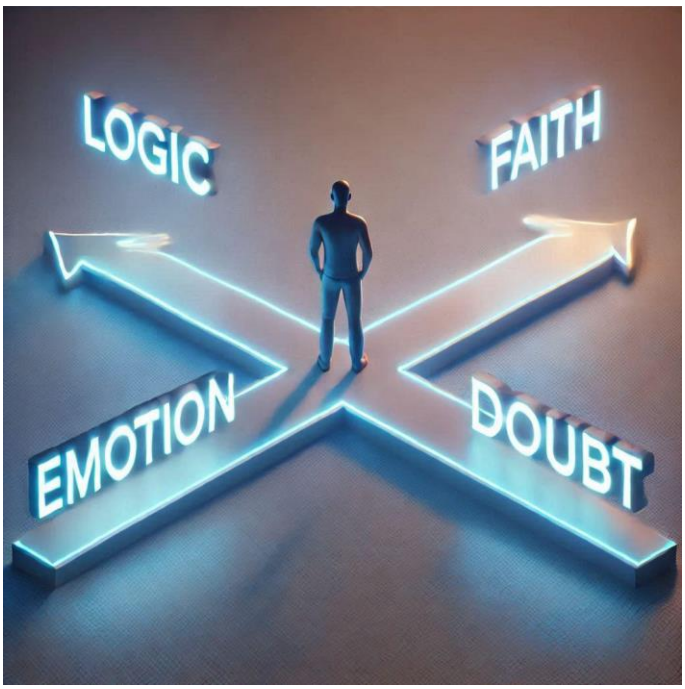
“Exercise in the Open Air — The whole system needs the invigorating influence of exercise in the open air. A few hours of manual labor each day would tend to renew the bodily vigor and rest and relax the mind.” —Testimonies for the Church 4:264, 265 (1876), Ellen G. White.

People who find it trouble focusing are usually in a state of unrest. If someone is suffering from restlessness, they need to get rest. How do they get to rest? Matthew 11:28 (KJV) – "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Jesus promises to give us rest when we go to Him. This promise may seem far-fetched to some, but it is indeed true. Those who have encountered Christ (including me) report experiencing a certain unexplainable peace. Philippians 4:7 (KJV) – "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Prayer and fasting with Bible study can end all psychological disorders and cure all mental illnesses, making the child of God more focused on doing their appointed work without procrastinating.

Difficulty in Making Decisions



Sometimes procrastination results from the inability to make decisions. When there are too many options available, there is difficulty in making decisions. We do not know what to choose because every choice seems good. However, we must distinguish between what seems good and what is actually good.

Proverbs 14:12 (KJV) – "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The Bible says there is a way that seems right but wrong. There is a way that seems fun and exciting, but the end is destruction.

Without guidance from God, it is challenging and impossible, to know which way is right. In John 14:5, Thomas asks Jesus, "How can we know the way?" Jesus answered him in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. What Jesus was telling him, and He is also telling us, is that if we need to know the right direction, we should follow Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

The book of Proverbs tells us that we need to acknowledge God in all our ways. The Hebrew word used for *acknowledge* is 'Yada.' It is a primitive root of the word 'to know properly.' It can also mean acquainted. Therefore, we need to be acquainted with God in all our ways. This means we must familiarize ourselves with God as we perform our duties.

God promises that if we do that, He will direct our paths. Knowledge of God is power. "A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real

safeguard against temptation. It is this alone that can make us like God in character." - Ministry of Healing, Page 409.2, Ellen G. White.

Genesis 2:17 (KJV) – “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” When God created human beings, He desired them to only know good (all good comes from God). He did not want them to know evil. God desired man to know Him. In everything He created, God left His signature there; that is why all creation speaks of His love.

Every tiny insect, blade of grass, or even microscopic elements such as cells and molecules speak of God's love. God knows that life is full of surprises that you may not be able to handle with your own strength. That is one reason why He desires us to know Him so that we can have the power to conquer all challenges.

How, then, do we know God? John 1:1 (KJV) – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word of God." The Bible tells us that God and His Word are the same. Therefore, to know God, we must know His Word. Knowledge of God's Word is the knowledge of God. Many Christians are eager to hear God's voice. They expect to hear a loud voice speaking so that they can know it's God speaking. One way of listening to God’s voice is through His Word.

“How may we know His voice from that of a stranger? How shall we distinguish it from the voice of a false shepherd? God reveals His will to us in His Word, the Holy Scriptures. His voice is also revealed in His providential workings; and it will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from Him by walking in our own ways, doing according to our own wills, and following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, until the senses have become so confused that eternal things are not discerned, and the voice of Satan is so disguised that it is accepted as the voice of God.” – Communion With God, Page 94.7, Ellen G. White.

The faithful Biblical prophets did not enjoy the privilege we have now because they did not have the complete Bible from Genesis to Revelation. They did not have the privilege to read Christian authors such as Ellen G. White. In this 21st Century, we have the complete Bible and various Christian authors with divine interpretations of the Bible. We have access to Christian blogs on the internet, Christian Podcasts, and Christian content on social media such as TikTok and

Instagram. We also have Christian videos on YouTube where we can access sermons from various Godly preachers.

The reason we don't know God is not that the knowledge of God is unavailable. It is because we see no value in accessing it. We can spend hours on video games and series which add little value to our lives but cannot listen to a one-hour sermon. We can spend hours on romantic and other secular novels but cannot spend at least thirty minutes a day reading the Bible. As a result, our decision-making is as poor as darkness, as frail as human flesh, and as fragile as slippery glass.

God's Word will make us more familiar with His will because God's will is always in line with God's Word. Our purpose will be clearly defined, like a circle drawn with a geometric compass. We won't struggle much with making decisions because God will tell us exactly what to do.

The Word of God helps in filtering our choices. Like the uncluttered narrow, straight path that leads to heaven, our options will be few, and our decisions will be well organized. When we have fewer choices, procrastination will be less because we will have removed all stumbling blocks and replaced them with stepping stones.

For example, one may have various options, such as: attending a nightclub party of your best friend, attending a secular concert of your favorite musician, watching the world cup with your family, or going to church for a prayer night. Someone without knowledge and understanding of God's Word will find it difficult to make such a decision.

However, someone who knows God's Word will easily choose to attend a prayer night in the church because they know that Psalms 122:1 says, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." They will understand that engaging in fellowship is more valuable than engaging in other options.

Procrastination is caused by an inability to choose what to do or decide to do the wrong thing. Deuteronomy 30:19 (KJV) – "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:" Unfortunately, many choose curses. Many choose death.

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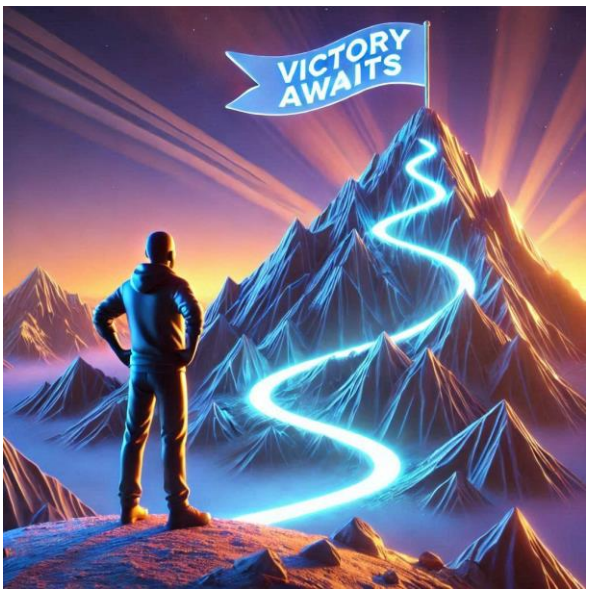
Resisting Challenges



Challenges can never be resisted. Attempting to resist challenges that one is to meet when embarking on a good cause brings more treacherous problems than one had not expected. When one procrastinates on their God-given purpose or calling because they fear challenges, they ultimately get bad experiences because they are running away from God's blessings. When one runs away from a blessing, they move towards a curse.

“But we must meet all obstacles placed in our way, and overcome them one at a time. If we overcome the first difficulty, we shall be stronger to meet the next, and at every effort will become better able to make advancement. By looking to Jesus, we may be overcomers. It is by fastening our eyes on the difficulties and shrinking from earnest battle for the right, that we become weak and faithless.” – Messages to Young People, Page 46.1, Ellen G. White.

A student may procrastinate private self-study on their academics, thinking that they have a lot of time on their hands. Unexpected like rain on a sunny day, exams come and find them unprepared. The student fails the exam due to a lack of preparation caused by procrastination.

After failing, they face the long-term challenge of enduring years of suffering because they don't possess the minimum qualification to access a well-paying job. Some may argue that they don't need to study because they will be entrepreneurs. If they lack discipline in academics, they will also lack discipline in entrepreneurship. Opening and running a business may not always be as fun and cool as many envision it.

Entrepreneurship requires tough discipline than academics because it is tougher than academics. Academic exams may seem difficult, but they are not very difficult because you just need to answer what you have read or been taught. Exams are always set within the Syllabus. They are not set beyond the Syllabus. Employment is not very difficult because you are paid for what you are told

to do. Entrepreneurship is difficult because you need to figure out what to do. Entrepreneurship can be challenging because you don't know what to expect. You may have read and mastered all the business books, but your situation differs from those in the books.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected so many businesses causing some companies that had existed for decades to close. Before the pandemic hit, no book had talked about it. They might have talked about other similar crises. However, something similar may have a few comparable characteristics, but they are not exactly the same. It is like two twins who look exactly alike, dress the same, and probably have a few identical behaviors but different careers and life goals. It is like looking at yourself in the mirror. What is in the mirror is your image, not you. However, nothing is impossible. When you put God first, you will make it in everything, whether it's academics, employment, or entrepreneurship.

The challenges you are running away from are either very small or non-existent. Jonah avoided going to Nineveh because he might have feared the people of Nineveh would kill him if he told them the truth. When he went and warned them, the Nineveh people, from the greatest to the lowest, put on sackcloth and proclaimed a fast (Jonah 3:5).

The Ninevites didn't harm Jonah. Instead, they humbled themselves and sought forgiveness from God. When Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Nebuchadnezzar did not punish him even though he was a harsh king; instead, he elevated him.

When Daniel and his friends purposed not to eat the king's meat and wine, they were not punished (Daniel 1). After interpreting his dream, Joseph was elevated by Potiphar. The dream had a good beginning but a worse ending (Genesis 41). Potiphar loved and respected Joseph for telling him the truth and set him above everyone else in the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:41-45).

When you procrastinate giving your life to Jesus because you fear what people will say or losing on the 'good' things this world has to offer, you are procrastinating blessings. Once you give your life to Jesus, you will realize that your life has become more joyful and peaceful than it was before. You will recognize the pleasures of sin are counterfeit pleasures, which last only for a season (Hebrews 11:25). True joy is in God.

When you avoid and procrastinate preaching essential truths such as the Sabbath because you don't want people to feel that you are banishing their religion or denominations, you are procrastinating

blessings that may come with that. You may find that some people need that truth, and God has ordained you to give them. Some don't know that Saturday is the Sabbath, and once they know, the Holy Spirit convicts them, and they convert immediately.

Don't procrastinate on your purpose because you think it won't give you quick money to pay your bills and satisfy your gratifications instantly. Embark on it with faith. You may embark on it today and receive a breakthrough the next day because life is unpredictable. Likewise, you may embark on it today and fail to receive a breakthrough immediately but receive a breakthrough after a few years, which is going to be bigger than if you had chosen something else outside your purpose.

If Jeremiah had revolted to be an engineer or a doctor while God had ordained him to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:5), he would be living fraudulently. He wouldn't have impacted the millions of people he impacted for thousands of generations.

When God called Jeremiah, Jeremiah wanted to procrastinate by saying he was a child (Jeremiah 1:6). In other words, He was telling God to wait until he got older. God told him, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak (Jeremiah 1:7, KJV)". Your God-given purpose usually comes with God-given power to overcome all setbacks. Don't procrastinate on it.

Avoid delay at all costs. The Bible says in Proverbs 6:10-11 (KJV) - "[10] Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: [11] So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Notice the wordings "a little" not much, just "a little." A little delay can really cost you. The idea you have delayed doesn't take long before you start seeing someone else prospering with your concept while the flood of poverty has attacked you like an armed robber.

It's time to wake up and do what you want to do, so long as you do it to God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), God will bless it.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) starts with the word 'Remember.' Another way for saying remember is 'Do not forget.' The Sabbath commandment must be at the top of our minds throughout the week. If this principle is treasured and jealously guarded, it will enable us to work with diligence for the six days that God has ordained for us to work.

If the Sabbath commandment is always in our minds, we will not procrastinate. We will do what needs to be done when it needs to be done so that by Friday sunset, we have finished all our duties and thus rest on Saturday. Many do not rest properly on Sabbath because their unfinished tasks can't allow their minds to rest. Don't be surprised that such people never thought about the Sabbath during the week.

"There is danger in delay. That soul whom you might have found, that soul to whom you might have opened the Scriptures, passes beyond your reach. Satan has prepared some net for his feet, and tomorrow he may be working out the plans of the archenemy of God. Why delay one day? Why not go to work at once?" — Testimonies for the Church 6:443, Ellen G. White.

"Vigilance and fidelity have been required of Christ's followers in every age; but now that we are standing upon the very verge of the eternal world, holding the truths we do, having so great light, so important a work, we must double our diligence. Everyone is to do to the very utmost of his ability. My brother, you endanger your own salvation if you hold back now. God will call you to account if you fail in the work He has assigned you." — Testimonies for the Church 5:460, 461, Ellen G. White.

John 2:5 (KJV) – "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." John 13:27 (KJV) – "Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Whatever God tells you to do, do it, and do it quickly. If you have a procrastination habit, ask God for forgiveness and ask Him to give you the grace to stop.

It is sinful to procrastinate because you are delaying God's children your useful service.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come to you in the mighty name of Jesus. Forgive me for all the times I've procrastinated. Forgive me for not serving you excellently as I should and forgive me for failing to serve your people for the purpose you have given me.

Lord, take away whatever causes me to procrastinate. Take away laziness, low self-esteem, psychological disorders, mental health issues, and inability to make decisions, among other things that make me procrastinate. Replace all these with diligence, patience, peace of mind, confidence, and focus.

Please help me to treasure progress before perfection but, at the same time, put me on the road of constant improvement. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. I offer this solemn prayer unto you, believing and trusting that you have answered this prayer because it is your will that I stop procrastinating. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity 1

- List the things you have been delaying starting or doing and pray over them daily.
- Prioritize them and choose which ones to start first.
- Set deadlines for yourself to accomplish those tasks.
- Have a weekly schedule that includes those tasks.

Activity 2

The "5-Minute Action Starter"

1. **Set a Timer for 5 Minutes**: Choose one task or decision you've been avoiding.
2. **Take Imperfect Action**: Start the task with the mindset that it doesn't have to be perfect—just begin.
3. **Focus on One Small Step**: Break it into the simplest action (e.g., write one sentence, organize one item, or brainstorm one idea).

4. **Pause and Reflect**: When the timer ends, evaluate how it felt to take that step and identify your next small action.
5. **Repeat Daily**: Over time, this builds momentum, reduces fear of imperfection, and creates a habit of progress.

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CHAPTER 31

FAITH IN GOD IS FOR YOUR OWN BENEFIT

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Bless yourselves by benefitting one another,

Faith in God is for your own benefit,

Mess yourself by harming one another,

Lack of faith in God leads to results that are a misfit.

The distance you travel is determined by the steps you take ahead,

Faith in God is for your own benefit,

If you don't want to go far, don't take steps and stay in bed,

Lack of faith in God leads to results that are a misfit.

Your altitude is determined by how far you choose to go up,

Faith in God is for your own benefit,

If you don't want to fly high, then stop everything and give up,

Lack of faith in God leads to results that are a misfit.

You are closer to getting there than you think,

Faith in God is for your own benefit,

Stay focused on your journey, make sure you don't blink,

Lack of faith in God leads to results that are a misfit.

When you do something righteous is for your benefit. On the other hand, doing something evil is for your destruction.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

God had instructed Noah to build an ark that was large enough to fit everyone in the world at that time since God is willing to save everybody. 2 Peter 3:9 says that God is not willing that anyone should perish. However, people ridiculed Noah and laughed at him while he was undertaking that assignment and preaching to them. Noah did not care, he decided to move with faith, and as a result, he was able to save himself and his house from the flood.

In Hebrews 11:7, let's look at the phrase 'to the saving of his house.' The ark did not save anyone else. It only saved Noah and his family. Noah would have perished with his family if he had disobeyed God and failed to build the ark. The people who mocked Noah thought they were harming Noah, but they were hurting themselves.

This divine example shows us how evil actions are for our destruction and righteous actions are for our benefit.

When God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17), He was seeking to benefit them. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3), they brought curses upon themselves, not to God. God's infinite love is what made Him angry with them. God is so loving that He wants you to benefit more than you want. When we get ourselves in trouble through our sinful actions, God feels pain more than we feel it. That is why God always does His best to bring us close to Him because He wants us to benefit.

God had warned Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve received various curses (Genesis 3:14-19). Had they obeyed God, they will be enjoying blessings such as immortality, and perfect health, among others.

Exodus 20:2 says, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Before God gave the Decalogue to the Israelites, He reminded them of their days of slavery in Egypt and that He was the one who took them out.

He told them this in Exodus 20:2 to imply that if they did not want to return to slavery, they should keep the Ten Commandments. The commandments are not grievous. They are not meant for bondage. They are meant for liberation. In other words, they are meant for your benefit. Those people who are incarcerated and are guilty of charge got themselves in prison because of breaking at least one of God's commandments.

If we understand that every good thing we do is for our benefit, we will always obey God. Some people think going to church, praying, reading the Bible, or singing songs of praise will benefit God. Some, when they do service to God that they consider a lot, think that they have done too much for God that they ought not to do. This thought is erroneous because you can never do too much for God. What you have done for God compared to what God has done for you is like a single grain of salt in the Pacific Ocean. It is insignificant. What we do for God does not benefit God. It helps us as individuals.

When you preach the gospel in your neighborhood and the Spirit of God through the word you have preached convicts criminals, you have benefited yourself because you have created a more peaceful environment to live in.

When you pray for your broke friends and relatives to gain financial stability, you have benefited yourself because you will no longer feel disturbed by their borrowing and depending on you.

When you visit the sick, and through your fellowship with them, they receive healing, you have benefited yourself because you will live in a healthier environment.

As a politician, you may not need bodyguards if you have truly helped your community since there will be no thieves to steal from or harm you. This may look impossible, but there are countries where the crime rate is almost zero, like Switzerland. Some countries have little or no corruption, economies thrive, and everybody benefits.

Proverbs 14:34 (KJV) – “Righteousness exalteth a nation." During Solomon's reign, silver and gold (highly precious and rare metals) were plenty in Jerusalem, like common stones (1 Kings

10:27). He made the Cedar trees to be as common as Sycamore trees in the foothills (2 Chronicles 1:15).

"It is as we give ourselves to God for the service of humanity that He gives Himself to us. No one can give place in his own heart and life for the stream of God's blessings to flow to others without receiving in himself a rich reward." —Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pages 81 – 82, Ellen G. White.

In Genesis 13, Abraham and Lot decided to separate after seeing the land they were living in could not contain their possessions. Abraham gave Lot the ability to choose first. Abraham was older than Lot, and he was his uncle. Secondly, in the land they were living in, Lot was under the care of Abraham because it was God who had called Abraham to get out of his country to go to a land that The Lord would show him (Genesis 12:1-3).

Lot was accompanying Abraham (Genesis 13:1). Therefore, Abraham had every right to choose first. However, since he was righteous, he allowed Lot to choose first. This act was righteous, loving other people more than you love yourself. Lot chose the best well-watered place for himself (Genesis 13:10-11), leaving the dry and ugly areas for Abraham.

In the eyes of human beings, Abraham had lost, and Lot had won. In God's eyes, Abraham had won. Genesis 13:14-15 (NKJV) – "[14] And the LORD said to Abram after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; [15] for all the land which you see I give it to you and your descendants forever." God gave Abraham the whole land, including what was Lot's, for that one simple righteous action.

A couple of years back, I attended a networking meeting, and someone talked about social media marketing when we were having a discussion. I remembered a friend who does digital marketing, and I recommended him while in the meeting room. I talked so well about him, giving the people in that meeting the impression that he was the best they could ever hire.

The one leading the discussion didn't pay much attention to that but at the end of the meeting, a certain lady came and asked me to introduce him to that guy because she needed someone to do digital marketing for her. I took the guy to her office, and he was given a contract as a freelancer. The lady then asked me what I did. At that time, I wasn't doing anything; I was looking for any opportunity to jump on. I told the lady I do website development and mobile application

development. She gave me two web and app development contracts and sent me a deposit (half the total amount) immediately.

I did not know how to develop an app or a website, but I learned on the job and delivered. Within the same time frame, she gave me a contract to design a presentation, and I was able to learn graphic design on the job. I was paid with no experience at all. I had no portfolio. I had no money to market myself. That is how I got into the Technology business. She has given me business till now and recommends people to me. That one simple good action of recommending a friend paid me more than it paid him.

It is God who uplifts and who gives breakthroughs, not necessarily your experience and skills. Your skills are important to maintain what God has given you. However, you can have the best skills, but if God is not in it, it is all in vain.

Therefore, we should seek to give ourselves to God for the service of humanity at all times. This sacrifice will result in our good in the end.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: [2] And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God."

The first hike I went to was to Mount Longonot in Kenya. As I was going up the mountain, I would get tired sometimes, and when I got tired, I would rest. After resting, I would get more energy to continue with the hiking. That experience clarified how keeping the Sabbath was for my own benefit. When you work six days and rest on the seventh, you receive fresh energy to push for another six days. Therefore, you become more productive than those who have worked seven days a week.

Righteousness pays, it pays other people, it pays you.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to think, speak, and act in righteousness at all times because it is for my benefit. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Reflect on the Essay:
2. Take some time to reflect on the essay you've read. Consider the examples and biblical references that illustrate the principle that righteousness benefits the doer and the recipient. Internalize the idea that your actions have a direct impact on your life.
3. Identify Areas of Impact:
4. Identify areas in your life where you can make a positive impact on others and, in turn, experience personal benefits. This could include your family, friends, community, or workplace.
5. Set Weekly Goals:
6. Set a goal to perform at least one act of kindness or righteousness each week for the next month. These acts can vary from helping a neighbor, volunteering your time, or simply offering a kind word of encouragement to someone in need.
7. Keep a Journal:
8. Maintain a journal to record your experiences. Write down the acts of kindness you perform, the people you help, and any positive outcomes you observe. Reflect on how these actions made you feel and the ripple effects they may have had.
9. Share Your Experiences:
10. Share your experiences and reflections with a close friend or family member. Discuss the positive impact these acts of kindness have had on your life. Encourage them to join you in this challenge.
11. Continue the Practice:
12. After completing the one-month challenge, continue incorporating acts of kindness and righteousness into your daily life. Make it a habit to seek opportunities to benefit others, knowing that these actions also enrich your own life.

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CHAPTER 32

THE OBEDIENT HEART: FOLLOWING GOD'S WILL IN FAITH

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Abraham obeyed, not knowing where he went,

He trusted in God, time with Him he spent,

"I will go", he said to God, wherever he was sent,

His faith brought blessings more super than Clark Kent.

Faith in God should be more regular than sunrise and sunset,

God's protection is more fortified than a trademark or a patent,

God cares and loves you more than your earthly parent,

So, have faith in God and love Him, one hundred percent.

God told Abraham to get out of his country, out of his comfort zone,

Abraham obeyed God and left the place of Haran where he was born,

He answered to God's call even though he had no smartphone,

He obeyed God, went forward and left home sweet home.

Like a sturdy foundation, faith supports us,

Like the president of a nation, faith should lead us,

Like an unbridled imagination, faith should live in us,

Like a steady location, faith should be steady in us.

Hebrews 11:8 (KJV) – “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

“Obedience to His statutes and laws is the life and prosperity of His people.” – The Faith I Live By, Page 89.4, Ellen G. White.

Abraham trusted in God and believed that God had the best in store for him; that is why he obeyed. He obeyed, unaware of the rewards or consequences. Faith is trusting in God despite harsh and challenging circumstances and not arguing with Him. Faith needs to come first, then understanding later. In other words, faith should guide your understanding, Hebrews 11:3 - "Through Faith we understand."

- When God tells you to return His tithe, don't argue with Him saying, "I've got a huge debt. I'm a widow and got a family to feed," just Obey.
- When God tells you to keep the Sabbath holy, don't give excuses, for example, "It is my final semester to graduate, and there's only one class remaining which is on the Sabbath," Obey.
- When God tells you to stop committing adultery, don't give excuses like "I have no husband or wife of my own" Obey.
- When God tells you to stop fornicating, don't say, "I have only one girlfriend or boyfriend, and we are faithful to each other" Obey.
- When God tells you to stop drinking, don't give excuses like, "How I'm I going to handle this stress and depression that I'm facing" Obey.

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) – “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Hebrews 11:8 (KJV) – “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Let's look at the word 'after' in this context - When you see the word after, you automatically understand that there was a before. Before precedes after, and after succeeds before. For an action to happen after, there must be prior action.

Abraham was to receive the land as an inheritance after obeying God and going to that land. It means that for Abraham to receive the blessing that God had in store for him, he had to obey God first. There are blessings in every commandment of God. Everything God has told us to do in the Bible is for our benefit. If we obey God, we benefit ourselves, not God, as many think.

If Abraham did not obey God and gone to that land, he wouldn't have inherited it. If he had questioned God's reason for commanding him to do that and tried to understand before applying faith, he would have lost on that blessing.

Let's look at the phrase 'obeyed, and he went out' - If the Bible said 'obeyed' and left it at that, it would be enough. If the Bible said, 'he went out' without the word obey, it would still be enough. But the Bible included these two almost similar phrases as one phrase to create an emphasis on obedience. This phrase means that Abraham did what God told him to do 100%, not 70% or 99%, like some of us.

The phrase also implies that Abraham made a decision in his mind to obey God and followed the decision with actions. Many people feel convicted by a sermon but still won't obey. At the same time, many people do many righteous acts but miss out on just one because it's uncomfortable to follow everything.

Let's look at the importance of doing the best for God:

Hebrews 11:4 (KJV) – “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead yet speaketh.”

Cain and Abel had gone to worship God, but God accepted Abel's worship/sacrifice and rejected Cain's.

Genesis 4:4-5 (KJV) – “[4] And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: [5] But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”

The only worship accepted by God is worship done in truth and spirit. Doing exactly what God has said, not adding or removing anything, is essential to a Christian life because that is one way

to portray faith and the only way to please God. Hebrews 11:6 – “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him.”

Let's look again at the phrase 'obeyed, and he went out.' This means he obeyed God immediately with no delay. If he had delayed, he would have delayed or missed out on the blessings God had in store for him. Some people are not in light of the truth and are living ignorantly. Therefore, God understands and gives them grace till they come to the knowledge of the truth. Others will listen to the truth and get convinced that it is true but decide to delay.

For example, "I'm 21 years old and still young. Let me have fun now and enjoy my youth, I will stop sinning when I reach 30, and I'm ready to settle down" or "I'm well convinced that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but I will start keeping the Sabbath when I get a new job, because the job that I'm having requires me to work on the Sabbath" or "I'm heavily in debt almost going bankrupt, wait I finish paying my debts then I will return the tithe."

Luke 9:59-60 (KJV) – “[59] And He said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. [60] Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

In these two verses, Jesus told a man to follow Him, but he chose to bury his father first before following Jesus. Burying his father was a good thing because he loved his father and also as a show of respect, but following Jesus was more essential than burying his father, which means that the man loved his father more than Jesus.

What does the Bible say about this? Matthew 10:37 (KJV) – “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” The man esteemed his father's burial as more important than the kingdom of God. Keep in mind the man did not refuse to follow Jesus directly. He instead chose to delay. Take note that when you delay making a decision, you've already decided because delay in itself is a decision.

The fact that Abraham obeyed immediately without delay does not mean that Abraham didn't have other important things to do. It means he committed to following God first. Matthew 6:33 – “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”

Let's look at Luke 9:59-60 and try to understand the text deeper. The person that is being buried in what state is he? The answer is simple, the person being buried is dead. Let's keep that in mind, then jump to John 14:6 (KJV) – “Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”

Keeping John 14:6 in mind, let's go back and look at the meaning of Luke 9:59-60, Jesus, who is Life, told the man to follow Him, but the man chose to follow the dead first before following Life. Well, this is a decision we've unknowingly made innumerable times in our lives. Most times, we choose to follow the ways of death than the ways of life. Romans 6:23 (KJV) – “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Let's take a microscopic look at "not knowing whither he went.” In other words, Abraham did not know where he went, whether it was a good or a bad place. He had no family in the land he went to and did not know anyone there. All this means that Abraham was ready to obey God even in uncomfortable circumstances. This sentence also implies that Abraham obeyed God without question. Most of us lose on blessings because we always want to ask God the reason behind everything, He is telling us, and if we see no reason to obey, we choose to disobey.

Therefore, in summary, these are the lessons we learn from Hebrews 11:8:

1. Always do what God has told you to do entirely and wholeheartedly, whether it is favoring you or not.

2. Obey God without questioning. That is the beginning of true faith.

3. Obey God immediately with no delay.

4. There are blessings in obedience (Read Deuteronomy 28:1-13, Matthew 5, and Revelation 22:14).

“Christ came to this earth to show the human race how to obey God. He might have remained in heaven, and from there given exact rules for man’s guidance. But he did not do this. In order that we might make no mistake, He took our nature, and in it lived a life of perfect obedience. He obeyed in humanity, ennobling and elevating humanity by obedience. He lived in obedience to God, that not only by word of mouth, but by His every action, He might honor the law. By so

doing, He not only declared that we ought to obey, but showed us how to obey." - Signs of the Times, January 25, 1899, Ellen G. White.

Make a firm decision to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4), and encounter God's blessings.

In conclusion, Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV) says – "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come before you with hearts open to your guidance and wisdom. I thank you for the lessons on faith and obedience as seen in the life of Abraham. Help me to trust you even in challenging circumstances, to obey without hesitation, and to prioritize your commandments. Grant me the strength to follow your path with unwavering faith and to seek your will above all else. May I find blessings in my obedience and honor you with my actions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Self-Reflection: Take some time to reflect on your life and identify areas where you might have been hesitant or made excuses for not fully obeying God's commandments.
2. Commit to Immediate Obedience: Commit to obey and ask God to help you in your weak areas.
3. Study and Share: Study the relevant scriptures that support your decision for obedience. Share these scriptures and your commitment with a trusted friend or mentor for accountability.
4. Prayerful Reflection: Spend time in prayer, seeking God's guidance, strength, and understanding as you step out in faith to obey His command.
5. Record Progress: Keep a journal of your journey in obedience. Write down the challenges you face, the blessings you receive, and how your faith is growing through this process.

Remember that by living in obedience to God's commandments, you are fulfilling your duty and drawing closer to Him. This will open the door to blessings and a deeper relationship with your Heavenly Father.

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CHAPTER 33

FAITH IS HAVING A HEAVEN-BOUND MIND

Hey, what's on your mind today?

Are you hunting for treasures amidst life's hay?

Well, here's a tip that'll make you shine,

Cultivate a heaven-bound mind, it's a diamond in the mine!

Are you lost in thought, chasing rabbits down the hole,

Or are you focused on your goals, taking charge of your role?

How about redirecting your thoughts to something grand?

A heaven-bound mind is like a compass in your hand!

Do you yearn for a place up high,

Or are you stuck in a place where darkness won't die?

Choose carefully who you follow, and you'll see,

A heaven-bound mind is like a ticket to eternity!

Do you mirror people who walk on this earth,

Or do you follow the One who made the heaven and earth?

A heaven-bound mind is like a recipe for success,

So, let's focus on the One who can make us blessed!

Hebrews 11:8-10 (KJV) - "[8] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. [9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: [10] For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

“Of the posterity of Abraham it is written, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Verse 13. We must dwell as pilgrims and strangers here if we would gain “a better country, that is, an heavenly.” Verse 16. Those who are children of Abraham will be seeking the city which he looked for, “whose builder and maker is God.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 170.2, Ellen G. White.

Even though Abraham had God's promise to inherit land on earth, his focus was not on this life. His focus was on the life to come. While he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, it was tough for him. He was living in tabernacles/tents in that land of promise which was quite hard. You can imagine being hungry and having food on the table that you can't eat. However, this never troubled Abraham because his focus was on higher things. He put his mind on the city with foundations.

Commenting on Abraham, Ellen G. White writes in her book, With God at Dawn, Page 355, “He possessed great substance, and he used it to the glory of God and good of his fellow-men; but he did not look upon this world as his home. The Lord had called him to leave his idolatrous countrymen, with the promise of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession; yet neither he nor his son nor his son’s son received it.”

“Put your mind on the city with foundations whose builder and maker is God for as long as your mind is on the city, the experiences of the tabernacle are bearable.” – Pastor Randy Skeete. It is like undertaking a short course training whereby you know after you are done with the course, you will get your dream job. The course may be strenuous, but you will be willing to undergo the stress because of the rewards you await. Therefore, a mind that is heaven-bound will not feel much pain from the trouble he faces in this world compared to an earthly-bound mind.

A mind that is earthly bound has no hope. The pain in such a mind may end up destroying the person. That is why it is dangerous not to believe in God. As some think, not believing in God does not cause one to be an intellectual giant. On the contrary, not believing in God causes one to be an intellectual dwarf, void of wisdom, because their focus is not on things above but on lowly things.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV) – "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

God wants to give you all these things, but He does not want your focus to be on them. He wants your focus on higher things that are not of this world. If you focus on things of this world, you will be like the unbelievers (gentiles), and you won't be able to go as high in achievements as God intends. An example is Jeremiah. God ordained Jeremiah to be a prophet unto the nations (Jeremiah 1:5). If he neglected God's calling and ventured into something else to make money and earn a living, he wouldn't have been as great as God intended him to be.

God knew He had plans to prosper Jeremiah and not harm him. He knew that if Jeremiah would agree to follow Him, People would read Jeremiah's work for thousands of years. And as we can see by focusing on God, Jeremiah has impacted billions worldwide across generations. Jeremiah's focus was on the city with foundations and upon this focus, he built a strong tower of God's truth that is unshakeable.

Jeremiah agreed to be used by God and, as a result, got the privilege to have kings and men of all caliber, including those in lofty positions, listen to him, and some followed and still follow his God-given counsel. His counsel has been able to raise men from the lowliest of ranks to unfathomable heights.

"All these things," said Jesus, "do the nations of the world seek after." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Luke 12:30; Matthew 6:32, 33. I have come to open to you the kingdom of love and righteousness and peace. Open your hearts to receive this kingdom, and make its service your highest interest. Though it is a spiritual kingdom, fear not that your needs for this life will be uncared-for. If you give yourself to God's service, He who has

all power in heaven and earth will provide for your needs.” – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 99.1, Ellen G, White.

Proverbs 23:4 (KJV) – “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom." The Bible does not say you should not be rich. Instead, it says, "do not labor to be rich." Many who have labored to be rich have labored so hard, and still, they have been unable to get riches. Those who have gotten stupendous wealth are those whose labor focuses on a higher purpose. The highest purpose we can ever focus on is entering into God's kingdom and having the righteousness of Christ. This focus will set us high above everyone else in the world, and whatever work we do will surpass the work of worldly men and women.

Someone whose sole focus is God's kingdom has a higher aim. If he is a doctor, he will do his best to save a patient from dying. He will intercede for each patient under his care, and in his attempt to heal the patient, he will realize that he can't do anything by his own might. John 15:5 (KJV) – "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth not in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Therefore, the physician will be constantly dependent on God, and as a result, they will bring forth much fruit.

A lawyer whose first focus is the kingdom of God will not support and defend a client in court who has broken God’s law. A teacher who seeks God's kingdom and His righteousness will want all students in their class to acquire salvation. As a result, they will treat the students with love and do their best to ensure that even the slowest learner and naughtiest students get the most out of the lessons. They will aim to transform, not just to inform.

A pastor who loves God above everyone else will always preach the truth. A president or a leader of any jurisdiction will depend on God to guide him in all their affairs and will lean not on their own understanding. Thus, because heaven's high principles will govern the earthly organization, God's will; will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The nation or organization they lead will be likened to a little heaven.

“Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life. Whatever

we do is to be done heartily, as unto the Lord." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, Page 99.2, Ellen G. White.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The fourth commandment starts by saying *remember*. This is a call for the use of memory, the use of one's mind. This commandment means that the Sabbath should always be at the top of our minds because the Sabbath points us to God as the Creator. Therefore, when we acknowledge that God is our Creator, we will realize that we depend on Him in everything, and our focus will always be on Him. We will focus on what He has in store for us rather than what we have in store for ourselves.

"God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. The precious things of the hills shall perish, but the soul that lives for God shall abide with Him. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John 2:17. The city of God will open its golden gates to receive him who learned while on earth to lean on God for guidance and wisdom, for comfort and hope, amid loss and affliction. The songs of the angels will welcome him there, and for him the tree of life shall yield its fruit. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Isaiah 54:10." – Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, Page 99.4, Ellen G. White.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I open my heart for you to dwell in. Please keep me focused on You. Cleanse my mind and make it heaven bound. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Reflect: What do you spend most of your time thinking of? If it is something ungodly, ask God to help you overcome it.
2. Bible memorization: Find Bible verses that you can memorize every day. This exercise will help keep your mind focused on God.

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CHAPTER 34

FAITH ABOVE EMOTIONS

Feelings change, but faith should be constant,

Faith should be firm, faith should not be stagnant,

Trust God even when the life winds are rampant,

Faith above fear, faith above emotions.

Detach from all worldly things, attach yourself to God,

Focus on Him alone, even when you look odd,

God warms you, but Satan's side it's cold,

Faith above fear, faith above emotions.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for,

Faith is the evidence of things longed for,

Faith is grasping what you are looking for,

Faith above fear, faith above emotions.

Faith is having courage and hope in times of adversity,

Faith is sticking to God, detaching from all other gods of perversity,

Faith is following the narrow way, abstain from all controversy,

Faith above fear, faith above emotions.

Hebrews 11:8 (KJV) – “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Let’s look at God’s call to Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3 (KJV) – “[1] Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

God told Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. His country was the place he lived in. The Hebrew word used for kindred refers to birthplace and relatives. Therefore, God was calling him to get away from his birthplace and far from his relatives. God called him to get out from his father's house.

The question is, how old was Abraham when God called him? Abraham was 75 years old. When you live somewhere for 75 years, you get emotionally attached to that place, and God knows this. This is because you have encountered the most beautiful memories in that place.

Abraham probably had beautiful childhood memories of Haran. He had the best and most tremendous memories of his youth life. He also had amazing memories of his marriage to Sarah and how they had lived after their wedding. He had witnessed his relatives living their best lives, and occasionally, they had remarkable and unforgettable celebrations.

In Haran, he probably had genuine friends and relatives whom he could rely on whenever he encountered difficulty. He probably never dreamt or imagined going anywhere else. In his mind, he thought that since he was born there, he would die there.

However, God had a different plan for him. To bless him, he had to get out of the place that he was emotionally connected to and go to a place that he was not emotionally inclined to. Sometimes we fail to access more of what God has in store for us because we are emotionally linked to someone or something.

Some street children/people get offered good shelter and other essential amenities by good Samaritans, but they refuse because they are emotionally tied to the streets. Continuity in some

addictions and some sins are sometimes due to an emotional attachment to that addiction or sin. For example, you keep having memories of drinking and going to nightclubs with friends and find it difficult to stop.

Some find it difficult to stop adultery and fornication because of the memories they keep having of the sexual partners they have been with. God is calling you to exercise faith and get out from that sin you are emotionally bonded to. By His divine power, He will help us disengage from the evil we are tightly engaged to.

Genesis 3:6 (KJV) – "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

Adam knew that God had told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, he chose to obey his wife rather than God. His emotional attachment to his wife caused him to sin. It is God who has given us emotions. However, He expects us to love Him more than we love anyone or anything else in this world. That is the whole essence of faith, We should trust in the invisible God more than the visible people or things. Adam's lack of faith brought sin and ruin to the world.

"Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her, whose society had been his joy. How could he have it thus? Adam had enjoyed the companionship of God and of holy angels. He had looked upon the glory of the Creator. He understood the high destiny opened to the human race should they remain faithful to God. Yet all these blessings were lost sight of in the fear of losing that one gift which, in his eyes, outvalued every other. Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could supply her place. He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her. After all, he reasoned, might not the words of the wise serpent be true? Eve was before him as beautiful and apparently as innocent as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater love for him than before. No sign of death appeared in her,

and he decided to brave the consequences. He seized the fruit and quickly ate." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 56.2, Ellen G. White.

Some people are convicted beyond doubt that robbery is wrong, and they are aware of the consequences that can come with it. However, they continue in it because they do not want to disengage themselves from their 'true' friends in their robbery circles. They would rather die than leave their friends, even though association with such friends will result in them losing their freedom or lives.

Sometimes God will allow a scenario where some gang members will get killed and leave one alive to disengage them. Sometimes, He will allow some to be taken to prison. Usually, it is rare to see everyone in a gang encountering the same fate. One will die and leave the others, or all may die and leave one. One will be taken to prison and leave the others. God has given us social circles, but He deals with us as individuals. Even identical twins are not born at the same time.

Exodus 20:10 (KJV) – "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

Talking of social institutions and circles, the Sabbath is a tremendous social institution. God calls everyone to rest, including the animals, so that we can commune together. However, when giving this commandment, He does not address us generally. He addresses us as individuals. He does not say, "Ensure your family does not work on Sabbath." Instead, He says you ensure that you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your animals, and your visitor keep the Sabbath.

God deals with us as individuals. He did not create Adam and Eve at the same time. He created Adam first, then caused a deep sleep to fall upon him before creating Eve. He gave different punishments to Adam, Eve, and the snake and while inquiring of the sin they committed, He inquired from each one as an individual. God wants us to socialize, and He is delighted when we socialize with other people to glorify Him, but He deals with us as individuals.

Job 1:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. [5] And it was so when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning,

and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Job 1:18-20 (KJV) – "[18] While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: [19] And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. [20] Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped."

Job loved his children so much that he offered sacrifices just in case they had sinned without his knowledge. However, he was not emotionally engaged to them more than he was emotionally engaged to God. When Job heard the tragedy that had befallen him, and his sons and daughters were dead, he fell to the ground and worshipped God.

Job 2:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. [10] But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Job loved his wife, but he did not allow the love of his wife get in between his relationship with God.

Matthew 19:21-23 (KJV) – "[21] Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me. [22] But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. [23] Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The rich young ruler refused to follow Christ because he was emotionally affixed to his material wealth. He probably pictured how he had worked hard to get that wealth, his sacrifices, the early mornings and late nights, and the business associations he had formed.

He might have thought he would be lowly esteemed by his friends and society once he changed his status. He may have been worried about what people would think of him to leave all his possessions and follow a 'poor' man like Jesus who had nowhere to lay his head (Matthew 8:20).

He might have feared that his friends and business associates would laugh and jest at him after they realize what he has done.

Jesus could see all this; therefore, He felt sorrow for the rich young ruler. God loves us, and He wants us to be materially rich. However, this world's material riches are temporary compared to eternal riches. Therefore, He wants us to seek what is long-term, not short-term. There is no problem if you become legally rich while in this world. The problem is to put aside eternal glory while pursuing earthly riches. Mark 8:36 (KJV) – "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Luke 19:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. [9] And Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

"The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction, he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher. "Holiness unto the Lord" is to be written upon daybooks and ledgers, on deeds, receipts, and bills of exchange. Those who profess to be followers of Christ and who deal in an unrighteous manner are bearing false witness against the character of a holy, just, and merciful God. Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life. Like the chief publican, he will give proof of his sincerity by making restitution. The Lord says, "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; ... none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: ... He shall surely live." Ezekiel 33:15, 16." – The Desire of Ages, Page 556.1, Ellen G. White.

"If we have injured others through any unjust business transaction, if we have overreached in trade, or defrauded any man, even though it be within the pale of the law, we should confess our wrong and make restitution as far as lies in our power. It is right for us to restore not only that which we have taken, but all that it would have accumulated if put to a right and wise use during the time it has been in our possession." – The Desire of Ages, Page 556.2, Ellen G. White.

Zacchaeus did not forfeit eternal life by holding onto the things of this world. He detached his emotions from the material goods he had obtained and attached his love to Jesus. Jesus saved him and was delighted by his total surrender to Him.

Matthew 8:21-22 (KJV) – "[21] And another of His disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. [22] But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." One of the disciples of Jesus was reluctant to follow Him because he wanted to bury his father first before following Christ. Jesus knew the man was mourning his father and understood the grief the child of God felt for losing his father. However, He told the man to follow Him because He is the Creator.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Life flows from God. If Jesus could raise Jairus' daughter and Lazarus, He could also raise the man's father. The man might have felt that all hope was lost after losing his father, but God is the foundation and the initiator of all hope. Some people have been convicted that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but they say, "wait first I finish this semester so that I keep the Sabbath." or "wait first I get a new job."

Abraham was rich (Genesis 13:2), but what does the Bible say about Abraham? Hebrews 11:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: [10] For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The word sojourn means to dwell temporarily.

Abraham was very rich but knew his time on this earth was temporary that is why he lived in tents. Therefore, he lived in this world as if he was living in a foreign place because his focus was not on this world. His focus was on heaven. His mind was on the afterlife, not the current life, as is common with most men.

Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." Jesus is saying that those who detach themselves from all these good and

essential things of this earth will receive them in abundance in this life and in the world to come eternal life.

Following emotions can sometimes lead to destruction. Many have ruined their lives because of acting out of feelings. Most consumers buy products due to emotions and not logic. Thus, some foster continuous habits of impulse buying and going beyond their budget, leading to bankruptcy. Some students engage in truancy because they do not feel like going to school. Others are not diligent in their studies or calling because they do not feel like studying or pursuing that calling. We should always do what is right regardless of our feelings.

Too much emotional attachment to earthly things will block you from receiving blessings. It will block you from encountering growth in all aspects of your life. Let us disengage from all these things and attach ourselves to God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant us unwavering faith amidst changing emotions. Help us detach from worldly ties and cling to You. Strengthen us in adversity, prioritizing faith above all else. May our trust in You be steadfast. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Activity

Write down everything that you hold on so dearly to. Ask God to make you love Him than you love those things.

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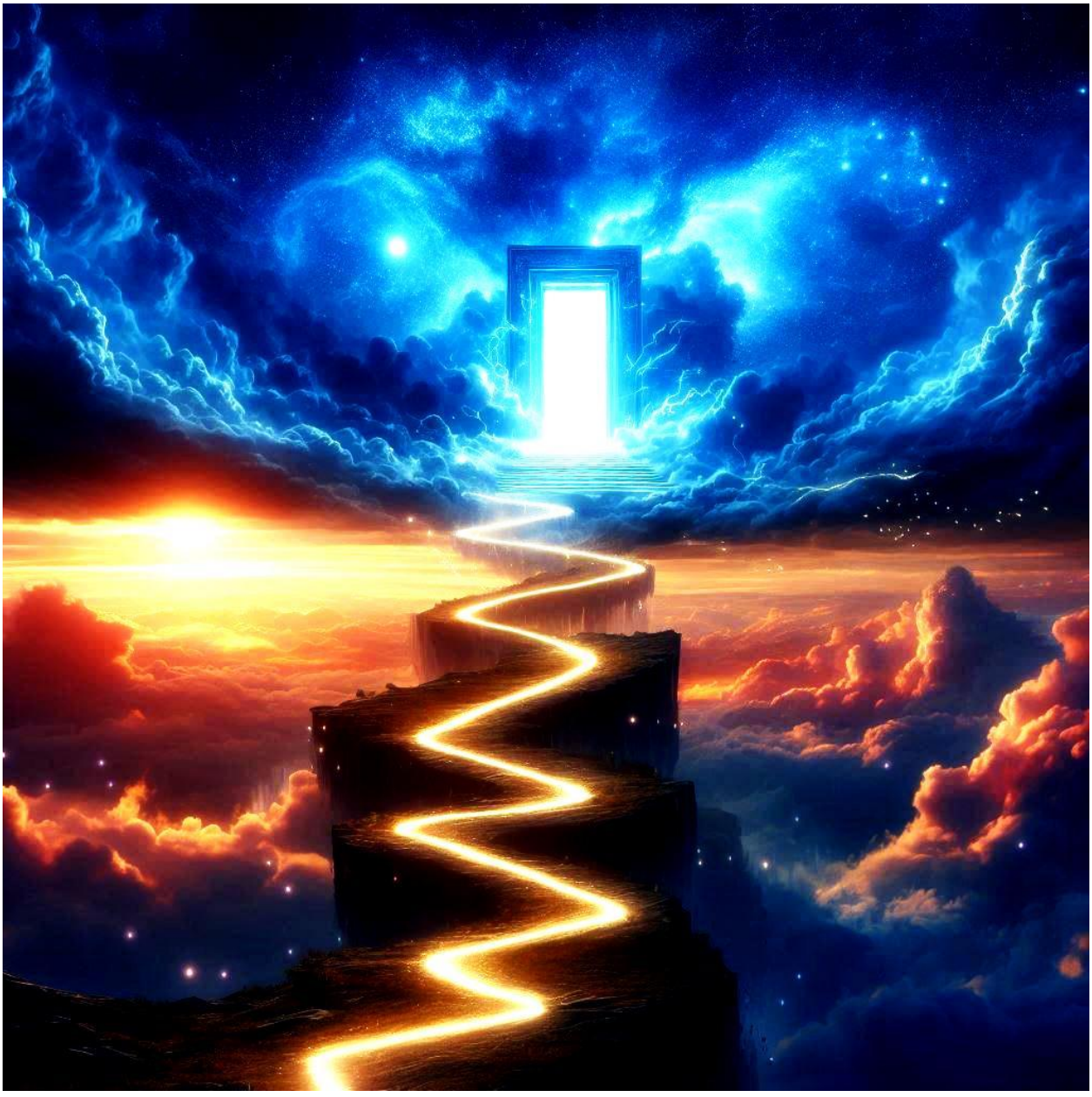
CHAPTER 35

END OF THE ROAD



A lesson profound, in seeking the Lord Divine,
For in God's embrace, the brightest stars align,
Matthew 5:16, let your light so shine,
Let God prepare a table before your enemies, for you to dine.

From the hills of lost donkeys to a regal throne,
Proverbs 16:9, in God's hands, our steps are known,
In life's journey, God's grace is shown,
Jeremiah 29:11, His plans, a destiny sown.

Saul, once lost in the donkeys' chase,
Encountered destiny, face to face,
He got what he lost and more to embrace,
More than the best for you is God's interest.

So, in the hills of challenges where echoes ring,
Seek God's guidance; let your heart joyfully sing,
A poem of destiny, with voices bright,
In the steps of life, find your celestial light.

1 Samuel 9:3-6 (NKJV) – "[3] Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, "Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." [4] So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. [5] When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us." [6] And he said to him, "Look now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go."

"Saul was the son of a powerful and wealthy chief, yet in accordance with the simplicity of the times he was engaged with his father in the humble duties of a husbandman. Some of his father's animals having strayed upon the mountains, Saul went with a servant to seek for them. For three days they searched in vain, when, as they were not far from Ramah, the home of Samuel, the servant proposed that they should inquire of the prophet concerning the missing property. "I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver," he said: "that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way." This was in accordance with the custom of the times. A person approaching a superior in rank or office made him a small present, as an expression of respect." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 608.3, Ellen G. White.

Kish had lost his donkeys and sent Saul to search for them. He did not send him alone; he sent him with one of his servants, as two are better than one. They looked for them through the mountains of Ephraim, the land of Shaalim, and the land of the Benjamites and still did not find them. Despite looking in all those different places, their search brought no results. They had reached the end of the road. They had looked everywhere where they thought the donkeys might have been but did not see them anywhere. Their final attempt was to seek help from a man of God.

Seeking help from a man of God was seeking help from God since the man of God depended on the power that came from God to prophesy and help the people with their needs. It is quite unfortunate that most of us seek God at the end when our human effort has failed us instead of seeking God at the beginning. Things would be much easier for us if we sought God at the beginning before doing anything. If they had sought the prophet before searching for the donkeys, they would not need to have gone to all those places searching for them.

The disciples of Jesus spent the whole day fishing, got tired, and were still unable to catch fish. When they involved Jesus in their activity, they caught so much that could not fit in the net (John 21:1-11). Hard work without God will bring little to no results. Diligence, together with God, brings outstanding results.

Psalm 127:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. [2] It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep."

Some people may wonder how they will work for six days while resting on Sabbath and achieve results like those who work for seven days. God is responsible for the results, not our human effort. Jesus performed more miracles on the Sabbath than on any other day. That is why He said in Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV) – "[28] Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The rest that God gives you will result to increase of your produce. Saul and his servant worked so hard to find the donkeys so that they may find rest after they had accomplished that objective. Their hard work did not give them rest because true rest is found in the Lord. It was after approaching the man of God that they found rest.

1 Samuel 9:15-20 (NKJV) – "[15] Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, [16] "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me." [17] So when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people." [18] Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me, where is the seer's house?" [19] Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart. [20] But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?"

Saul and his servant worked hard to look for the donkeys without giving up. They did not give up. That is why they decided to seek help from a man of God. Therefore, they went to look for Samuel, the prophet. God had told Samuel about Saul the day before. When Samuel set his eyes on Saul, God told him it was the man He had chosen to be the king of the Israelites. God had allowed Saul to face the difficulty of finding the donkeys, knowing He had prepared a wonderful blessing ahead.

We should never give up, for there is something good God has set for us when we feel we have reached the end of the road. God wanted to make Saul king, but Saul did not know. He considered it impossible since he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and his family was the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9:21).

Saul was frustrated when he failed to find the donkeys. When God allows you to face certain situations or when He seems to have delayed, He has better things for you in store than those you had previously expected. His only desire was to find his father's donkeys. This story reminds us of Joseph, who was thrown in prison when he was in Egypt. While in prison, his only desire was to be released from prison. God made him Prime Minister of Egypt, the highest position in the land; only Pharaoh was higher.

1 Samuel 10:1-2 (NKJV) – "[1] Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: "Is it not because the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance? [2] When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found."

Samuel anointed Saul as king and told him where to find his donkeys. Ephesians 3:20 (KJV) – "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." God will always give you better than what you previously wanted. Some people have tarmacked for years in such for employment, but God ends up giving them high-paying jobs or, better, a flourishing business.

Joel 2:25 (KJV) – "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." Samuel told Saul where his father's donkeys were, and he anointed him as king to rule the people of Israel.

1 Samuel 10:9-10 (NKJV) – "[9] So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. [10] When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."

"As Saul united with the prophets in their worship, a great change was wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. The light of divine purity and holiness shone in upon the darkness of the natural heart. He saw himself as he was before God. He saw the beauty of holiness. He was now called to begin the warfare against sin and Satan, and he was made to feel that in this conflict his strength must come wholly from God. The plan of salvation, which had before seemed dim and uncertain, was opened to his understanding. The Lord endowed him with courage and wisdom for his high station. He revealed to him the Source of strength and grace, and enlightened his understanding as to the divine claims and his own duty." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 610.3, Ellen G. White.

In addition to anointing him as king, God filled Saul with the Holy Spirit that he began to prophesy. People had not known him as a prophet; they knew him as Saul, the son of Kish. People marveled at his gift of prophecy. It is not recorded in the Bible that he had asked God for that gift. God gifted him freely, as he blessed him with the privilege of ruling over the Israelites.

1 Samuel 10:17-25 (NKJV) – "[17] Then Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah, [18] and said to the children of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.' [19] But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!' Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans." [20] And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. [21] When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found. [22] Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, "Has the man come here yet?" And the Lord answered, "There he is, hidden among the equipment." [23] So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. [24] And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?" So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!" [25] Then

Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house."

Saul was proclaimed king by Samuel in the sight of the Israelites. All those who loved him and all those who despised him witnessed him being crowned king. Psalm 23:5 (KJV) – "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." God prepared a table for Saul in the presence of his enemies and friends. Saul got his anointing as king while humbly undertaking home duties, helping his father find his donkeys.

Children should not neglect home duties, for they carry lots of blessings. Jacob was also blessed while conducting house chores. You might be on the verge of giving up. You might have tried your best to the point that you feel that there is nothing left to do. God has prepared something better for you beyond your wildest imagination. Don't give up.

Jeremiah 29:13 (KJV) – "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, like Saul, we seek Your guidance in our endeavors. Forgive us for relying solely on our strength. Teach us to seek You at the beginning and trust in Your plans. When challenges arise, please help us to never give up but to press on in faith. Thank you for the assurance that when we seek You with all our hearts, we will find You. Guide us, and let Your Holy Spirit be our constant companion. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

1. Take a moment to reflect on a situation in your life where your efforts alone have not produced the desired results. Just as Saul sought the man of God, consider seeking guidance through prayer.

2. Write down your life's challenges and bring them before God, asking for His wisdom and direction.
3. Additionally, find a quiet place to spend some time in prayer and meditation. Reflect on the areas in your life where you may not have sought God's guidance. Ask for His forgiveness and commit to involving Him in all your endeavors.
4. As you seek God's guidance, be open to His leading and trust that His plans for you are better than anything you could imagine. Remember the promise in Jeremiah 29:13 that when you seek God with all your heart, you will find Him.

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CHAPTER 36

FAITH BEYOND SCIENCE FAITH BEYOND LOGIC

So, let our hearts sway to faith's rhythmic sound,
In a universe of science, where logic is crowned,
God embraces the humble and shuns the proud,
Trust in the Lord, in His word so profound.

God above science, God above logic,
With faith, your life events will look like magic,
Have doubt and turn your life into endless tragic,
Have faith and swim in blessings pelagic.

At ninety-nine, Abraham, a patriarch in waiting,
No heir to his name, doubts circulating,
He persisted in prayer, faith in God not ending,
God gave him Isaac, at the right time and setting.

In the narrative of Luke, Elizabeth's tale,
A barren womb, where logic turns pale,
The birth of John was a great story to tell,
With God nothing is impossible and nothing can fail.

In the wedding at Cana, a mother's insight,
"Whatever He says, do it with all your might."
A walk with God is a walk that's upright,
Faith illuminates and turns on light at night.

Hebrews 11:11 (KJV) – "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

According to the rules of science, Sarah couldn't conceive because she was past the age of conceiving. However, God is the Creator of all science and all natural laws. God is above all obstacles. That is why you should focus on God and not on the obstacles.

In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation (Genesis 12:2) when he was seventy-five years old (Genesis 12:4). When God gave Abraham this promise, Abraham did not have a single child. Someone who is seventy-five years old usually has grandchildren, while some are lucky to have great-grandchildren.

Abraham and Sarah did not have a single child at that time. Right before the Flood and before Abraham was born, God had reduced man's lifespan to 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Man would no longer live for centuries as he lived before. Therefore, judging from the 120-year lifespan, we can say that when Abraham was 75 years old, he was nearing the end. Probably in his mind, he wondered, how can he have a child when his life is almost over and he never had a child in his youth?

However, Abraham was not impotent at that time because he had a son called Ishmael through his maid Hagar while Sarah was barren. Sarah found it impossible to have a child, so she recommended Abraham to have a child with Hagar. Therefore, Abraham gave birth to Ishmael when he was 86 years old (Genesis 16:16). This recommendation was contrary to God's plan. God's will was for Abraham to have a child with his wife Sarah.

In Genesis 17:15, God promises Abraham that he will have a child through his wife, Sarah. Abraham found it ridiculous. Genesis 17:17-18 (KJV) – "17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" He could not believe that he would have a child at the age of one hundred.

Romans 4:19 (NKJV) says, "And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb." Hagar gave birth to Ishmael when she and Abraham could give birth.

Abraham gave birth to Isaac when he and Sarah could not give birth since Abraham's loins and Sarah's womb were dead. Scientifically, it was impossible for both of them to have children. Romans 4:19 tells us Abraham placed his faith above science and Hebrews 11:11 tells us that Sarah also placed faith above science. What is scientifically impossible is possible with God because God is the Creator of all science and all logic.

A similar tale to this is the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, who also had a child in old age. Luke 1:36 (KJV) – "And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren." A barren lady cannot give birth to a child. Elizabeth was not only barren, but she was also old, together with her husband, Zechariah. The angel tells Mary in Luke 1:36 that Elizabeth, who was once not favored by the laws of science (being in a barren state), will soon go beyond the science laws and give birth to a child.

"How often those who trusted the Word of God, though in themselves utterly helpless, have withstood the power of the whole world—Enoch, pure in heart, holy in life, holding fast his faith in the triumph of righteousness against a corrupt and scoffing generation; Noah and his household against the men of his time, men of the greatest physical and mental strength and the most debased in morals; the children of Israel at the Red Sea, a helpless, terrified multitude of slaves, against the mightiest army of the mightiest nation on the globe; David, a shepherd lad, having God's promise of the throne, against Saul, the established monarch, bent on holding fast his power; Shadrach and his companions in the fire, and Nebuchadnezzar on the throne; Daniel among the lions, his enemies in the high places of the kingdom; Jesus on the cross, and the Jewish priests and rulers forcing even the Roman governor to work their will; Paul in chains led to a criminal's death, Nero the despot of a world empire."– Education, Page 255, Ellen G. White.

"Such examples are not found in the Bible only. They abound in every record of human progress. The Vaudois and the Huguenots, Wycliffe and Huss, Jerome and Luther, Tyndale and Knox, Zinzendorf, and Wesley, with multitudes of others, have witnessed to the power of God's Word against human power and policy in support of evil. These are the world's true nobility. This is its royal line. In this line the youth of today are called to take their places." – Education, Page 255, Ellen G. White.

When God instructed Noah to build the ark, it had not rained on earth since God created the world. The falling of rain from the sky was a strange idea to many. The great antediluvian scientists of

that time would have found that illogical and unscientific. The earth was watered by mist or dew that came from underneath.

"The world before the Flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed. The recurring seasons had come in their order. Heretofore rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew. The rivers had never yet passed their boundaries, but had borne their waters safely to the sea. Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks. But these reasoners did not recognize the hand of Him who had stayed the waters, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Job 38:11." –Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 96.3, Ellen G. White.

1 Kings 17:11, Elijah orders the widow at Zarephath to bring him a morsel of bread to eat. The widow responds to him in 1 Kings 17:12 (KJV) – "And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

At first, the widow found it illogical to give Elijah the meal she was left with because it was only enough for her and her son. However, she obeyed the Word of God brought through His servant Elijah. As a result, she never ran out of food. If she had relied on what made sense to her, she would have eaten that one meal and died as she said, but because she leaned not on her own understanding, the food was in constant supply. It is a great blessing to rely on God, and it is a tremendous blessing to rely on God when we are facing the most harrowing circumstances.

You are sinking in debt, and your boss threatens to fire you if you fail to go to work on Sabbath (Saturday). You don't know where you will go next as you have more than ten children dependent on you. Don't rely on what's logical. Trust in God. God blessed the woman extremely that when her son fell sick and almost died, God healed her son through His servant Elijah. It is always a blessing to house genuine men of God or be close to them. The whole land was facing famine, but this one widow was blessed by obeying God.

"The widow of Zarephath shared her morsel with Elijah, and in return, her life and that of her son were preserved. And to all who, in time of trial and want, give sympathy and assistance to others more needy, God has promised great blessing. He has not changed. His power is no less now than in the days of Elijah. No less sure now than when spoken by our Saviour is the promise, "He that

receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." Matthew 10:41." – Prophets and Kings, Page 131.5, Ellen G. White.

Jesus fed a multitude of 5,000 men (not counting women and children) with five loaves of bread and two fish. Five loaves of bread and two fish cannot feed thirty people to their satisfaction, leave alone five thousand people. John 6:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? [6] And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do."

Jesus asked Philip this question to test him because He knew that Philip had no solution since they had no food and probably they did not have enough money to buy food (John 6:7, they had two hundred pennies) for all those people. He did not expect the correct answer from Philip. He asked him that question to test him. In John 6:7 (KJV), Philip answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Philip meant it was not logical to feed such a massive multitude with the two hundred pennyworth of bread they possessed.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said in John 6:9 (KJV) – "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" By saying this, Andrew implied that it was illogical to feed all those people with the bread and fish from the boy. Jesus patiently waited for His disciples to give their solutions.

The two disciples, Philip and Andrew, mentioned two impossible circumstances, saying that whatever was currently available was insufficient. Jesus understood their human reasoning and inability and gave divine assistance.

On a side note, divine help will come after you have exhausted your human ability, like Philip and Andrew, who tried to give solutions even if they thought they were not worthy. What you think is not worthy, if presented to God, God will make it worthy. If presented to God, the Creator of the Universe will increase/add value to what you think has less value or no value. Therefore, do your best to your limits, and when you have reached your limit, divine aid will cut off the chains of limitation.

John 6:10-12 (KJV) – "[10] And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. [11] And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set

down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. [12] When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

Jesus took the loaves that were seen to be insufficient by Andrew and the rest of the disciples and divided them among the great multitude. That which was thought impossible to feed the vast crowd fed the whole crowd to their satisfaction, and some food that filled twelve baskets remained. Logically, one added to one is equal to two but with faith, one added to one can equal one thousand or one million or whatever number God decides. Luke 1:37 (KJV) – "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

"The means in our possession may not seem to be sufficient for the work; but if we will move forward in faith, believing in the all-sufficient power of God, abundant resources will open before us. If the work be of God, He Himself will provide the means for its accomplishment. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. The little that is wisely and economically used in the service of the Lord of heaven will increase in the very act of imparting. In the hand of Christ, the small supply of food remained undiminished until the famished multitude were satisfied. If we go to the Source of all strength, with our hands of faith outstretched to receive, we shall be sustained in our work, even under the most forbidding circumstances, and shall be enabled to give to others the bread of life." – Desire of Ages, Page 371.1, Ellen G. White.

John 2:5 (KJV) – "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." By using the word whatsoever, Jesus' mother was telling the servants to do anything that Jesus told them to, whether it sounded logical or not. Unknown to Mary, the Holy Spirit might have spoken through her because what happened later was the miracle that Jesus performed of changing water into wine.

The people at the party had complained that there was no wine. Jesus told them to fill the water pots with water. This statement might have seemed illogical to them since they wanted wine, and Jesus was tasking them with filling the water pots with water. Luckily for them, with humble faith, they obeyed. After they obeyed, God answered their request, and they received the wine they requested.

"Besides the doorway stood six large stone water jars, and Jesus bade the servants fill these with water. It was done. Then as the wine was wanted for immediate use, He said, "Draw out now, and

bear unto the governor of the feast." Instead of the water with which the vessels had been filled, there flowed forth wine. Neither the ruler of the feast nor the guests generally were aware that the supply of wine had failed. Upon tasting that which the servants brought, the ruler found it superior to any he had ever before drunk, and very different from that served at the beginning of the feast. Turning to the bridegroom, he said, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." – The Desire of Ages, Page 148.2, Ellen G. White.

If you have faith in God, He will give you gifts that will never decay or lose taste, like the wine Jesus provided at the marriage festival. The devil may give you attractive gifts, but that attraction is just for a season like the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25). God's gifts are long-lasting and everlasting. We must place His Word above all science, natural, and logical laws.

God above science! God above logic!

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we delve into the depths of faith above science and logic, we seek Your divine guidance and wisdom. Illuminate our hearts with the light of Your Word. Please grant us the courage to embrace faith above science and logic. Let our reasoning be guided by faith in You. May our actions be reflections of Your divine plan, and may we find strength in surrendering to Your will. In moments of doubt, remind us that with You, all things are possible. Thank you for the stories of faith woven into the tapestry of Scripture. May we walk in the footsteps of those who trusted You beyond the boundaries of human comprehension?

In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Scripture Exploration:

Read and meditate on Hebrews 11:11. It is vital to write short notes when reading it.

Personal Faith Journal:

Start a faith journal to document moments where you've experienced God's faithfulness, especially during times when understanding seemed elusive. Write down prayers, answered or unanswered, and how they have shaped your faith journey.

Faith in Action:

Identify an area in your life where you often rely on your understanding or logic. Challenge yourself to surrender that area to God in prayer and take intentional steps to trust His guidance, even if it defies human reasoning.

Sharing Circles:

Create a small group or find a prayer partner to share your reflections and insights. Discuss how faith has played a role in your life and encourage one another to strengthen your reliance on God.

Random Acts of Faith:

Engage in small acts of kindness or generosity that require faith in God's provision. It could be financial giving, offering your time, or supporting someone in need. Reflect on how these acts deepen your trust in God's abundance.

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CHAPTER 37

FAITH IN GOD BRINGS ABUNDANCE

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Do you want a little or a little more?

Do you want a lot or a lot more?

God can not only give you much; He can give you much more,

Faith is the key that opens the stores of abundance.

By faith, we diligently obey God,

By faith, we love, honor, and stay focused on the Lord,

By faith, we follow the straight and narrow road,

Faith is the key that opens the windows and doors of heaven.

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down,

By faith, all heroes of faith shall inherit a crown,

Through faith, the miracles of Jesus became the talk of town,

Faith is the hand that gives you much more than you expected.

Borrow vessels, Borrow not a few,

Elisha gave the widow a strategy that she never knew,

Bring more people to God, let their hearts be made brand new,

Faith is the door that ushers you into true riches.

Hebrews 11:11-12 (KJV) – "[11] Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. [12] Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

God Gave Abraham Abundance

At first, Abraham could sire children, but Sarah was barren. As years passed, Abraham grew older and reached a point where he could no longer beget children. Therefore, his loins and Sarah's womb were dead too. A common saying goes, "As long as you are alive, there is hope." This statement means that hope ends where life ends. In other words, if you are dead, there is no hope.

Doctors try their best to treat a patient until that patient dies. That is when they conclude that there is nothing else left to do. To most of us, death translates to no hope. If you injure your hand, but it is still intact, you can put a bandage over it. If you hurt your finger, you will try to treat it. However, if one's hand or finger gets cut off from the body and they are thrown away, one has no hope of them growing back again.

When God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have children, they might have thought that God depended on their organs' functioning and would use their bodies' proper functioning to give them children. At first, Sarah tried assisting God with His work by recommending Abraham to take Haggar so that they could get a child. They got Ishmael, but Ishmael was not what God had promised. Later in the book of Genesis, Sarah laughs when she hears she will have a child because she cannot understand the possibility of it happening as she is not only barren but also quite old at the same time. Despite this, she decided to believe in the Word of God. They did not know how it would happen but trusted God that what He promised would happen.

Nowhere in the Bible is it recorded that Abraham cursed God or complained to Him when he saw years advancing while still unable to get a child with his wife, Sarah. They believed that God could not lie, and they were able to bear Isaac when all odds were against them. They bore Isaac when both of them were old with dead reproductive organs.

As a result of their faith, God multiplied their descendants. The Bible records that there were as many as the stars of the sky in multitude. Have you ever tried counting the stars? The stars are so many that you will get tired along the way if you try counting them. God wants to bless you so richly to a level that you will get tired when attempting to count His blessings. I wonder if anyone has ever tried counting the particles of sand. Sand particles are too small. If you put your hand on the earth and pick sand, you won't be able to count the sand in your hand. Now imagine the sand at the seashore.

God says He made Abraham's descendants as many as the sand on the seashore. Hebrews 13:8 (KJV) – "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The God of the Bible is the same God now. God can do the same for you if you have faith. He can give you innumerable blessings since He is a God who possesses infinite resources. Trust in God brings abundance.

Genesis 13:2 (KJV) – "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."

Faith in God made Abraham to be very rich in material possessions. Some Christians believe it is not God's will for someone to be wealthy in material possessions. Some believe that if you are obedient and loyal to God, you must be spiritually rich but materially poor. It is undeniable that Christians should not focus on material possessions; we should instead focus on God.

If we focus on serving God and serving His people, God can make us wealthy through our diligent and humble service. If God gives you a business idea and you run it according to God's will, showing genuine love and care for your employees and customers, how will you not be wealthy?

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) – "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." God wants you to serve people internationally, not just locally. Suppose you are a gospel musician or an author and distribute your songs and books internationally. In that case, you will likely bless more people and probably be wealthier than those focusing only on the local market. The more people you serve in business, the richer you will be. The better you serve them, the more they stick to you. Like Abraham, God can give you abundance in material possessions.

Deuteronomy 28:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. [5] Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store." The blessings listed in Deuteronomy 28:4-5 are material. Faith in God brings abundance in material blessings.

Genesis 13:14-17 (KJV) – "[14] And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

"Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! "Let there be no strife between me and thee," said Abraham, "for we be brethren;" not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10), is the teaching of our Saviour. The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own. Such will heed the divine injunction, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Philippians 2:4." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.3, Ellen G. White.

"Although Lot owed his prosperity to his connection with Abraham, he manifested no gratitude to his benefactor. Courtesy would have dictated that he yield the choice to Abraham, but instead of this he selfishly endeavored to grasp all its advantages. He "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, … even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." The most fertile region in all Palestine was the Jordan Valley, reminding the beholders of the lost Paradise and equaling the beauty and productiveness of the Nile-enriched plains they had so lately left. There were cities also, wealthy and beautiful, inviting to profitable traffic in their crowded marts. Dazzled with visions of worldly gain, Lot overlooked the moral and spiritual evils that would be encountered there. The inhabitants of the plain were "sinners before the Lord exceedingly;" but of this he was ignorant, or, knowing, gave it but little weight. He "chose him all the plain of Jordan," and "pitched his tent toward Sodom."

How little did he foresee the terrible results of that selfish choice!" – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 131.3, Ellen G. White.

Abraham desired peace between himself and Lot. He did not want the strife that their herders were having to continue. Therefore, he decided to separate with Lot so that there could be harmony between them. He told Lot to choose which side he wanted most. Whatever side Lot would choose, Abraham would choose the opposite side. If Abraham were selfish, he would have given Lot all the sound reasons why he should take the best side.

However, Abraham did not want an argument and wanted that process to be fast. Therefore, he was willing to follow Lot's choice. One reason why we delay in fulfilling God's purpose is because people take so much time to argue. Everyone believes their idea is the best, and they try to do their best to convince others that their vision is the best. In some committees, groups, teams, and families, some people want to be the ones who have the final say. They believe all suggestions that they do not make are wrong.

In The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell writes, "An idea does not have to be your idea to be good." Abraham was more senior than Lot in everything, but he allowed Lot to choose first. This action did not reduce him in any way. Instead, it uplifted him. When Lot chose the most fertile land, Abraham humbly took the worst side. After Lot left, God gave Abraham the entire land, including what was Lot's. Faith in God brings abundance.

Genesis 22:15-18 (KJV) – "[15] And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, [16] And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: [17] That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; [18] And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

God gave Abraham a difficult test. He had grown immensely in faith in that he obeyed God when God commanded him to give up his son, whom he really loved and whom they had waited for so long with his wife Sarah to have. Abraham proved to God that he put Him first above anyone else, including his beloved son.

We often say that we put God first, but in reality, we put other things ahead of God. Various parents put their children above God, and some children put their parents above God. While we must love our fellow men as we love ourselves, we must love God more than anything else. We should love God more than we love ourselves. When we do not want to go to church, the love of God in us should be more potent than our feeling of not wanting to go to church. When we do not want to pray or studying the Bible, the love of God in us should be stronger than those feelings.

Romans 12:1 (KJV) – "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our bodies need to be a living sacrifice to God. Our love for God should go above our selfish desires. Our faith in God should go above all emotions.

We can cultivate this love for God daily when we make it an everyday practice to worship and serve Him. Some may ask, "How can I serve God daily when we have church service only once a week?" Serving God is not solely confined to serving in the church. We can share God's Word with our friends on social media. After we receive a YouTube sermon or devotional article from someone, don't let the sharing chain stop with us. We should bless others as God has blessed us.

Abraham understood that God gave him his son Isaac, and he was willing to give back to God what God had given him. God was so pleased by this act that He pronounced an extraordinary blessing on Abraham for his extraordinary action. He promised to multiply his seed, and God shall bless all nations of the earth through him. This blessing was a confirmation of the promise that God had given Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 when He first called him.

Some people have blocked God from giving them gifts through their unrighteous actions. Any sin we do shuts a door for a blessing. On the other hand, any righteous act we do opens a door for a blessing. In Abraham's life, he continuously opened the door for God. As a result, blessings came marching in. Faith in God brings abundance.

Genesis 24:1 (KJV) – "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things."

In Genesis chapter 13, God had blessed Abraham with material possessions, but He had not yet blessed him with a child. In Deuteronomy 28:4, God promises that if you listen diligently to His voice and obey all His commandments, He will bless not only the fruit of your ground but also the

fruit of your body. Children are the fruit of one's body. The blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:1-13 are all anyone would ever want. Some people believe that God can't give you everything. If we look at the lives of various people in the world, we can see what seems to be evidence of this statement, in that most people we meet seem to be blessed in one area but lacking in another.

God seemed to have blessed Abraham in one area where he had great material possessions but lacked children. His faith in the living God gave him Children when he was past the age of siring children. Thus, Genesis 24:1 tells us that God had blessed Abraham in all things. God gave him a long life in that he lived to the age of 175. He gave him material possessions and a beautiful wife, making him a father of many nations. Faith in God brings abundance.

God Gave Isaac Abundance

Genesis 26:12-14 (KJV) – "[12] Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. [13] And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: [14] For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him."

Isaac wanted to go to Egypt because there was a famine in the land of the Philistines. God commanded him not to go to Egypt because He had a purpose for him where he was. Your place may not be pleasurable, but God has a purpose for you there. You might be homeless on the streets or living with relatives or friends who mistreat you. God has a purpose for you wherever you are. A certain YouTuber whose YouTube channel has influenced hundreds of thousands of people said he started his YouTube Channel when he was homeless, sleeping on a mattress in a sitting room of a friend's house.

One purpose God had for Isaac was to show the Philistines how powerful the God of Isaac was and eventually to make them believe in Him so that they, too, could inherit eternal life. The conditions in that land were worsening, and hunger was striking hard due to that Famine. In the midst of this famine, God caused Isaac to prosper. Nothing grew when the Philistines sowed in that land, but when Isaac sowed, his crops grew a hundredfold. This is to show that the laws of nature are under the control of God, and we should not depend on nature's rules more than we depend on God. What happened to Isaac is not an impossible event, as some may think it to be.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while many people lost their jobs and countries were put in lockdown, most of the world's population faced stark financial constraints, but a few prospered in the midst of the pandemic.

In the time of Prophet Elijah, there was a severe drought and famine, which God used to punish the people for worshipping idols. However, Prophet Elijah, being faithful to God, never lacked. God always provided for him using various means. Isaac became so great in the land of the Philistines that they were afraid of him. This event was proof of the promise God gives us if we obey His commands in Deuteronomy 28:10. Deuteronomy 28:10 (KJV) – "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee." The Philistines saw how powerful Isaac's God was through his prosperity and were afraid of Isaac. Even in times of great scarcity, faith in God brings abundance.

God Gave Jacob Abundance

Genesis 30:43 (KJV) – "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

"For twenty years Jacob remained in Mesopotamia, laboring in the service of Laban, who, disregarding the ties of kinship, was bent upon securing to himself all the benefits of their connection. Fourteen years of toil he demanded for his two daughters; and during the remaining period, Jacob's wages were ten times changed. Yet Jacob's service was diligent and faithful. His words to Laban in their last interview vividly describe the untiring vigilance which he had given to the interests of his exacting master: "This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 190.1, Ellen G. White.

For twenty long years, Jacob found himself toiling under the relentless demands of Laban in the land of Mesopotamia. Despite being family, Laban seemed more interested in exploiting Jacob's labor for his gain rather than fostering a mutually beneficial relationship. Can you imagine?

Fourteen years to earn the right to marry Laban's daughters, and then constantly changing terms afterward. It was a grueling and uncertain existence, to say the least.

Yet, throughout it all, Jacob remained steadfast and dedicated to his work. In their final confrontation, Jacob didn't hold back in expressing the sheer effort he had put into Laban's affairs. He vividly recounted the sleepless nights and weary days spent ensuring the well-being of Laban's flocks, even in the face of droughts and freezing temperatures. He spared no detail in describing his resolute commitment to the task at hand, regardless of the personal sacrifices it demanded.

Jacob's honesty and integrity were firm. Despite the challenges and temptations he faced, he never compromised his principles. He took his responsibilities seriously, ensuring that no single sheep or goat under his care met an untimely end, and never took advantage of his position for personal gain. His loyalty and dedication were a shining example in a world where deceit and exploitation were all too common.

His perseverance didn't go unnoticed. Despite the hardships Jacob endured, Jacob's steadfast dedication eventually led to his liberation and eventual success. Through his resilience and determination, Jacob emerged from his trials as a man of honor and integrity, destined for a future far brighter than the struggles of his past.

"When Jacob, growing weary of Laban's service, proposed to return to Canaan, he said to his father-in-law, "Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee." But Laban urged him to remain, declaring, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." He saw that his property was increasing under the care of his son-in-law." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 192.3, Ellen G. White.

"Said Jacob, "It was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude." But as time passed on, Laban became envious of the greater prosperity of Jacob, who "increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses." Laban's sons shared their father's jealousy, and their malicious speeches came to Jacob's ears: He "hath taken away all that was our father's, and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 192.4, Ellen G. White.

Jacob had faithfully labored for Laban, but Laban wanted to trick him and take most of the animals while leaving Jacob with just a few because he was selfish. God gave Jacob a divine strategy, which caused him to have more animals than Laban. Jacob increased exceedingly in wealth. He had a lot of cattle, maidservants, manservants, camels, and donkeys.

God usually gives powerful ideas and strategies you never once had and never knew existed. He gives you those ideas, but He does not implement them for you because if He implemented them for you, it would be a waste of the abilities and resources He has given you. He told Noah about the flood and told him to build an ark. He told him all the necessary materials to use when building the ark and the measurements, but He did not come down to build that ark. If you yield yourself to God and surround yourself with His Word, He will give you many ideas and strategies to handle complex life issues, making you successful in various facets of life. Faith in God brings abundance. It brings plenty of divine ideas and strategies.

God Gave Joseph Abundance

Genesis 41:38-44 (KJV) – "[38] And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? [39] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: [40] Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. [41] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. [42] And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; [43] And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. [44] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

"He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom." Psalm 105:21, 22. From the dungeon Joseph was exalted to be ruler over all the land of Egypt. It was a position of high honor, yet it was beset with difficulty and peril. One cannot stand upon a lofty height without danger. As the tempest leaves unharmed the lowly flower of the valley, while it uproots the stately tree upon the mountaintop, so those who

have maintained their integrity in humble life may be dragged down to the pit by the temptations that assail worldly success and honor. But Joseph's character bore the test alike of adversity and prosperity. The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner's cell. He was still a stranger in a heathen land, separated from his kindred, the worshipers of God; but he fully believed that the divine hand had directed his steps, and in constant reliance upon God he faithfully discharged the duties of his position. Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God; and though they adhered to their idolatry, they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.1, Ellen G. White.

Few narratives resonate as profoundly as the story of Joseph, the Hebrew patriarch, as recounted in the sacred scriptures. Within the verses of Psalm 105:21-22, we find a poignant encapsulation of Joseph's remarkable journey — from the depths of a dungeon to the pinnacle of power and authority in the land of Egypt. This passage highlights Joseph's elevation to a position of immense honor and underscores the profound trials and triumph that accompanied his ascent.

Joseph's story portrays unwavering faith, resilience, and divine providence. Cast into the darkness of a pit by his brothers, betrayed, and sold into slavery, Joseph's early life was fraught with adversity and hardship. Yet, amid these seemingly insurmountable challenges, his character begins to shine. His unwavering trust in the Almighty sustained him through the darkest times, illuminating a path of hope and redemption even in the depths of despair.

Emerging from the darkness of captivity, Joseph's ascent to power in Egypt was miraculous. Elevated to the position of lord over his master's house, he demonstrated an unparalleled level of integrity and wisdom. His appointment as ruler over all the land of Egypt truly showcased the depth of his character. Entrusted with authority and responsibility beyond measure, Joseph faced a perilous journey fraught with temptation and danger.

Indeed, as the passage poignantly illustrates, profound peril accompanies the heights of worldly success. Yet, amidst the trappings of power and prestige, Joseph remained steadfast in his devotion to God. Whether standing in the opulent halls of Pharaoh's palace or languishing in the confines of a prison cell, his faith remained unshaken, his commitment unwavering.

Joseph's unwavering fidelity to God was a beacon of light in a land steeped in idolatry and darkness. Through his exemplary life and character, he became a vessel that revealed the divine principles of righteousness and truth to the pagan rulers of Egypt. Though they may have clung to their false gods, the integrity and wisdom of this foreigner who worshipped the one true God moved them.

Joseph's journey is a timeless testament to the enduring power of faith and integrity. Through triumph and tragedy, Joseph remained steadfast in his commitment to righteousness, leaving an indelible legacy that inspires and uplifts countless generations.

"How was Joseph enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom?—In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator's will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.2, Ellen G. White.

"There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts. By adherence to principle in the transactions of ordinary life, the mind becomes accustomed to hold the claims of duty above those of pleasure and inclination. Minds thus disciplined are not wavering between right and wrong, like the reed trembling in the wind; they are loyal to duty because they have trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth. By faithfulness in that which is least they acquire strength to be faithful in greater matters."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 222.3, Ellen G. White.

No magician, wizard, or astrologer in Egypt could interpret Pharaoh's dream. An enslaved foreign prisoner called Joseph could interpret Pharaoh's dream using God's power. Joseph had shown

excellence in his gift of interpreting dreams in that he interpreted people's dreams while incarcerated. While in prison, life was not easy for him. Potiphar's wife accused Joseph wrongly; the judgment passed upon him was cruel injustice. He faced challenging circumstances while he was there. However, he maintained a positive attitude and continued to help people despite the terrible events that he was undergoing.

Finding someone willing to bless others when they are going through a rough time is rare. People will often wait for their troubles to get over first before they help someone else. When we give light to other people in our lowest moments, the light we shine to others is reflected to us. Therefore, even though our situations may be cruel, they won't hurt as much compared to how they would if we had done nothing to help others. Helping others results in our happiness. It is a powerful therapeutic remedy to help others when faced with the most stressful circumstances. A word of encouragement to someone else will go a long way in healing our hearts when we feel most discouraged.

Comforting someone heartbroken will do wonders in healing us when we feel heartbroken. God will bless you immensely when you bless someone else when it is inconvenient for you more than when it is convenient for you. This is because it takes a great sacrifice to bless someone else in moments of inconvenience more than in convenient moments. Joseph used his gift to bless others when it was inconvenient for him. He witnessed people he had helped get out of prison and elevated when he was still in prison. The eleventh-born son of Jacob did not get jealous of them or give up on God, as some of us do. He continued serving God.

When the right time came, an opportunity was presented to him to help the king using his gift. After he told Pharaoh the interpretation of the dream, the king was highly impressed that he gave Joseph the highest position; only Pharaoh was of a higher rank than him. He gave Joseph a higher status than Potiphar, the man who had thrown him in prison. Faith in God brings abundance. Faith in God will elevate you more than the people who once hated and mistreated you.

God Gave Job Abundance

Job 42:10-13 (KJV) – "[10] And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. [11] Then came there unto him all his brethren,

and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and everyone an earring of gold. [12] So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. [13] He had also seven sons and three daughters."

After hearing all the calamity that befell him, Job knelt and worshipped God (Job 1:20). Job never cursed God, even when his wife advised him to curse God and die (Job 2:9). He remained steadfast in God even after losing all he had. He could still pray for his friends while facing hard-hitting circumstances. After Job prayed for his friends, God turned away his captivity. God not only turned away Job's captivity. He also gave him twice as much as he had before. Faith in God brings abundance. Faith in God will bring you more than you ever had.

God Gave Solomon Abundance

1 Kings 3:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. [5] In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee."

King Solomon offered one thousand burnt offerings to God. One thousand burnt offerings are not only a lot in size but will also take a long time to burn. Therefore, Solomon sacrificed not only the offerings to God but also his time to God. Some of us return tithes and offerings but are unwilling to give our time to God. Sometimes, we get consumed in our duties and work on the Sabbath day instead of using it to rest.

Some people rest on the Sabbath day but have no time for the Almighty Father during the week. God is the Creator of all things. He is the Creator of education, and He is the Creator of all legal and moral occupations. The Lord God created work for our happiness and gave it numerous other rewards. He knows we need to work to sustain ourselves and make a living.

God knows that we need to study to gain more knowledge and to develop our minds. However, He wants us to depend on Him for our work's success rather than on our efforts for the success of

that work. The Lord wants us to put maximum effort into our studies and work. While putting maximum effort, He wants our efforts to align with His commandments so He can be fully responsible for our success.

“To every man is given “his work” (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God.” – Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

“Thus our business or calling is a part of God’s great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, He Himself is responsible for the results. “Laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9), our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God. The Word that fed Israel in the desert, and sustained Elijah through the time of famine, has the same power today. “Be not therefore anxious (R.V.), saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? … Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:31-33.” – Education, Page 138.2, Ellen G. White.

No time is wasted in prayer, no time is wasted in Bible study, and no time is wasted in serving God. It is common and somehow logical for us to think the more we spend time focusing on our work, the more successful it will be. These types of thoughts conform to logic, but they disregard faith. If we focus too much on our work and leave no time to pray or study the Bible, we may reap the rewards from our efforts, but the rewards won’t be as much as if we had spent more time with God. God requires us to be faithful stewards of our resources, skills, talents, and time.

Solomon took a long time to burn one thousand offerings. After he burnt all those offerings, God appeared to him in a dream, asking him to request anything he wanted. That request was meant to accelerate Solomon to unfathomable heights. Faith in God is the fastest accelerator. Many young people desire to be successful when they are still young. If you trust God, you can succeed at a young age.

One reason it is rare to see successful men and women in society is that many young men and women waste a lot of time doing the wrong thing because they do not know their purpose. If you

spend time with God, God will show you your purpose, and you will not have to waste much time pursuing what you are not meant to do.

Another reason we see few successful young people is because various young people use most of their God-given time and energy to sin. Therefore, sin degrades them as it makes them have a negative attitude toward life, have low self-esteem, lose respect and trust among people, and lose loyal friends. Sin also makes one to have less energy and time to pursue something meaningful.

Various young people have dropped out of college because they never liked the course of study they were pursuing. They took it because their parents told them to or because they did not know what to do. Some have dropped out in their third or fourth year of study and still have not figured out what to do, wasting more time than they had already wasted. These events would have been avoided if they had spent time with God because only God can tell you what you were born to do. Solomon spent time with God in worship by offering God one thousand burnt offerings.

Solomon sacrificing all those offerings means he had previously spent time with God and seen His goodness; that is why he did not consider it wasteful to offer all that to God. God of the universe, Creator of all things, visible and invisible, appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted. If Solomon had asked for a long life, God was willing to give him. God was ready to give him if he asked for all the gold and precious stones in the world. Whatever He asked for, God would give him.

How many years of secular hard work would it take for someone to reach that point that Solomon reached? God is higher than all kings and presidents in the world combined. There are many things that the most powerful king of earth cannot give you. Secondly, whatever the richest or most influential people in the world have is limited. God has unlimited resources because He is infinite (Psalm 90:1-2); He has no beginning and no end. If this universe's resources are insufficient, God can create more. Faith in God brings abundance. Why should we not yield to the power of a God who not only possesses abundant blessings but also created the word abundance?

1 Kings 3:9-14 (KJV) – "[9] Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? [10] And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. [11] And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked

riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; [12] Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. [13] And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14 And if thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

Unlike most of us, Solomon did not ask for things to satisfy his selfish desires. Instead, he asked God for wisdom and understanding to govern the people effectively. Before God, he acknowledged his insufficiency. It is common among us mortals to cower from a task that seems too heavy or difficult to carry out, even though the task promises excellent rewards. Solomon knew that the role of the king and the responsibilities pertaining to it were heavy. He had no previous experience of being a king and understood that he would likely face challenges he may need help overcoming.

Therefore, Solomon asked God to give him an understanding heart and the ability to discern between righteousness and evil so that he may be able to serve the people effectively. God was pleased by this act of faith. As a result, God gave Solomon what he asked for and what he did not ask for. In addition to giving him wisdom and understanding, He gave him riches and honor and promised to lengthen his days if he obeyed His commandments. Faith in God brings abundance. Faith in God will give you what you asked God for and what you did not ask God for.

Lack of Faith Brings Scarcity

Genesis 3:22-24 (KJV) – "[22] And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: [23] Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. [24] So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose to trust the Devil's word more than God's Word. Eating the fruit that God had forbidden them not to portrayed a lack of faith in God's Word. As a result,

they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, which had an abundance of everything, and placed where there was an abundance of scarcity. God had filled the Garden of Eden with fruits of all types, some of which may not be known today. It was beautiful beyond our level of understanding and imagination. The home granted to them by God before sin had a perfect temperature, and it had the Tree of Life next to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God placed them both in the middle of the garden. Deuteronomy 30:19 (KJV) – "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." God had given Adam and Eve a simple choice between good and evil before Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy (although Moses did not write the last chapter since it talks about Moses' death). He had placed the two trees next to each other, hoping the pair would decide wisely and choose life. Unfortunately, they chose death.

Revelation 3:20 (KJV) – "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Christ is knocking at the door of the hearts of everyone. It is your choice to let Him in or to let Him keep knocking. Lack of faith in God brought scarcity to Adam and Eve, and it continues to bring scarcity to us today. Faith in God brings abundance. Lack of faith in God brings scarcity.

If we believe in God, He will give us abundance of everything

John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God promises that if we believe in Him, He will give us abundant life. A life that has no end. Faith in God brings abundance.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for knocking on the door of my heart. Help me to have faith in You because faith in You brings abundance. Take me out of the prison of scarcity and help me to have an abundance mindset. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Reflect on how sin has brought scarcity in your life and choose to give your life to Christ.
- Reflect on the abundant blessings that your righteous actions have brought you and thank God for them.

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CHAPTER 38

FAITH IN GOD ALWAYS WINS

Faith in God always wins,

Faith in God never loses,

Faith in God is avoiding all sins,

Faith in God is making righteous choices.

Faith in God makes me a champion,

Faith in God makes Satan afraid,

God can make you stronger than a stallion,

God is the giver of our daily bread.

Even when you seem not to win,

Faith in God will make you victorious,

If you want to overcome sin,

Hold on to God the Creator, the most glorious.

Faith in God will put you above,

If you fear God and show Him love,

If you trust God and Him alone, you serve,

Faith in God will always make you thrive.

Hebrews 11:13 (KJV) – "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

A common saying says, "Good guys finish last." Dr. Ben Carson says in his book Think Big, "Good guys finish." These two contrasting statements have confused the majority of the population about which is true. However, many people believe the former statement is truer than the latter. They believe that this cruel world has no place for a good person. Many believe that one can only rise to the heights of financial prosperity through unscrupulous means. Some students firmly think they can only pass an examination by cheating. A couple of times, I have heard relationship advisors advising people not to be good to their partners if they want to be respected.

"By the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unvarying certainty. The reaping testifies to the sowing. Here no pretense is tolerated. Men may deceive their fellow men and may receive praise and compensation for service which they have not rendered. But in nature there can be no deception. On the unfaithful husbandman the harvest passes sentence of condemnation. And in the highest sense this is true also in the spiritual realm. It is in appearance, not in reality, that evil succeeds. The child who plays truant from school, the youth who is slothful in his studies, the clerk or apprentice who fails of serving the interests of his employer, the man in any business or profession who is untrue to his highest responsibilities, may flatter himself that, so long as the wrong is concealed, he is gaining an advantage. But not so; he is cheating himself. The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come." – Education, Page 108.2, Ellen G. White.

Evil succeeds only in appearance, not in reality. I have heard stories from various criminals and also read about some of them in books such as My Life in Crime by John Kiriamiti. When you listen to their stories, you will notice a familiar pattern. They succeeded for a while when they got into crime, but their success was only sustained briefly. They might have achieved for ten years, twenty years, or even thirty, but they did not commit crimes long before they got arrested and lost everything they had. Some may ask, what about the corrupt politicians who have stolen public funds and they continue to live successful lives?

The individuals in government who practice corruption may not be as successful as we think them to be. Unfortunately, many cannot come out clean and tell us how they regret their actions because,

unlike robbers, most are not arrested. Therefore, they cannot come to the public to narrate their regrets because they fear they will be arrested if they do.

However, this does not stop them from facing the consequences and curses that come with stolen resources. Some have died mysterious deaths, and after they died, their families mismanaged all they had accumulated. Some have caused their innocent children to experience curses from their unrighteous actions. Sinful pleasures last only for a season, that season may be one second, that season may be fifty years or even more. All in all, evil and all the 'good' it promises does not last long.

When I was in high school, there used to be a group of students who would cheat during exam time, but they still would not be able to score higher than those who had not cheated. In university, I was among the students who thought someone couldn't pass an examination without cheating. In my first semester, I cheated but did not score excellent grades. My score was slightly above average. It did not take long before I started getting the conviction that I should stop cheating. I did not understand how I would pass without cheating, but I decided to obey that conviction, nonetheless. It was when I stopped cheating that I started getting excellent grades. God was gracious in that I would get an A if I studied for an exam without much effort. I would get a B- if I did not study at all.

I remember a particular time we were given an exam. The exam had two sections. I did the first section, but most of the answers I had written, I felt that they were not correct. When I was about to do the second section, time was up. The professor was so strict that he did not allow additional time. The following semester, I feared opening the portal because I did not want to see my exam results, especially for that paper. Something happened that forced me to open it, and when I opened it, I realized I had an A in that exam. Till now, I have never understood how I got that A.

I also remember not studying for a unit/course in Decision Analysis because I was consumed with studying the other units/courses. The exam came, and it was so difficult I knew I had failed. The next semester came, and I was ready to retake that class. When I went to look at my grades, I realized I had a B-. I met the professor and told him, "You gave me a good grade, and I thought I had failed." He responded by telling me, "You failed; I just decided to give you a good grade."

When I sat down and analyzed my school experience, I said to myself if it is possible to succeed in school without cheating, it is possible to succeed in life without devious means. Judging from my personal experience and analysis of the general life events of other people, good guys don't finish last, as it is largely assumed. I have brought most of the problems I have faced, if not all, to myself. God has always been good to me. He has caused me no harm. Therefore, I strongly support Ben Carson's statement, "Good guys finish."

All the heroes of faith won. None of them lost. Most of them are dead in the grave awaiting the second coming of Christ. They believed that Jesus would return, and they tightly embraced that belief. Therefore, even though they seemed to lose in the controversial battle between righteousness and evil, they did not fail. Some were mocked and ridiculed, and others were persecuted.

The people who bullied them felt like winners when mocking them, and those who oppressed them felt like winners when they successfully killed them. Whenever a follower of Christ got persecuted, Christianity grew exponentially than before, and more people got converted. These results of people converting put Satan to shame because when he thought he had won, God proved that evil can never win and righteousness will always win. Proverbs 14:34 (KJV) – "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

Genesis 13:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. [9] Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. [10] And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. [11] Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."

"Abraham returned to Canaan "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." Lot was still with him, and again they came to Bethel, and pitched their tents by the altar which they had before erected. They soon found that increased possessions brought increased trouble. In the midst of hardships and trials they had dwelt together in harmony, but in their prosperity there was danger of strife between them. The pasturage was not sufficient for the flocks and herds of both, and the frequent

disputes among the herdsmen were brought for settlement to their masters. It was evident that they must separate. Abraham was Lot's senior in years, and his superior in relation, in wealth, and in position; yet he was the first to propose plans for preserving peace. Although the whole land had been given him by God Himself, he courteously waived this right." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.1, Ellen G. White.

"Let there be no strife," he said, "between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.2, Ellen G. White.

"Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! "Let there be no strife between me and thee," said Abraham, "for we be brethren;" not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10), is the teaching of our Saviour. The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own. Such will heed the divine injunction, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Philippians 2:4." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 132.3, Ellen G. White.

Genesis 13:14-17 (KJV) – "[14] And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

Abraham wanted peace with his nephew Lot more than he desired personal prosperity. God had blessed him with large amounts of cattle, silver, and gold. He did not fear losing them, as is the

common fear with most affluent people. Abraham cared less about what his cattle were going to feed on. Therefore, when allowing his nephew to choose first, he gave Lot that opportunity, knowing that Lot might choose the most fertile lands.

Abraham esteemed his relationship with his nephew, who was younger to be more valuable than his success. Lot esteemed his prosperity more. Therefore, he took the fertile lands and left the dilapidated places for Abraham. To us ordinary men and women, if we were present in that scene and watched that event happen, we would think that Lot has gained and Abraham has lost. Faith in God always wins. Faith in God never fails.

After the case was settled and Lot left for Sodom, God spoke to Abraham. He told him to look in all four directions of the world: north, south, east, and west. All the land that Abraham saw, God gave him. God gave Abraham the entire land, including what was Lot's. Without faith, it is impossible to please God because lack of faith blocks God from proving Himself to you. There are many things that God desires to give us, but He can't because we have little to no faith.

Daniel 3:24-27 (KJV) – "[24] Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. [25] He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. [26] Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. [27] And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

"In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn the men from their allegiance to the Ruler of the universe. From the history of their fathers they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the foundation of all true prosperity. Calmly facing the furnace, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so [if this is your decision], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Their faith strengthened as they declared that God would be glorified by delivering them,

and with triumphant assurance born of implicit trust in God, they added, "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." – Prophets and Kings, Page 507.3, Ellen G. White.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego seemed to have lost before the eyes of the people who saw them being thrown into the fiery furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar thought he had defeated them because the furnace was heated seven times, and even the people who took the Hebrew boys died. Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful pagan king, but when he saw the Hebrew Boys still alive in that fiery furnace, he called them, "servants of the Most High God." Faith in God always wins. Faith in God never loses.

Daniel 6:19-22 (KJV) – "[19] Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. [20] And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? [21] Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. [22] My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

King Darius was tricked into signing a decree that would torment Daniel since Daniel was the only one who could not bow down to worship him. Daniel held his allegiance to the One true God. The people could not find any fault against Daniel. Therefore, they tried to find fault in him through his loyalty and obedience to the living God. Daniel had resolved to stick to God, come what may. He knew that the decree targeted him, and he knew that he would be thrown into the lions' den. He knew that God had the power to deliver him once he was thrown into the lions' den, and he also understood that it might not be God's will to save him from being eaten by the lions.

Therefore, he was willing to lose his life rather than place other gods before God. God was all he had, and everything he had gotten, including his high position of authority, came from God. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den because he refused to worship the king and continued praying to God. His enemies thought they had won, and Daniel had lost since their plot of throwing him in the den was successful. God, being omnipotent, saved Daniel from being eaten by the lions. His enemies who had devised that plot were thrown into the lions' den and devoured by the lions. Thus, Daniel won against his enemies. Faith in God always wins. Faith in God never loses.

“Once more a proclamation was issued by a heathen ruler, exalting the God of Daniel as the true God. “King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 544.5, Ellen G. White.

“The wicked opposition to God’s servant was now completely broken. “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” And through association with him, these heathen monarchs were constrained to acknowledge his God as “the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” – Prophets and Kings, Page 545.1, Ellen G. White.

Mark 15:29-32 (KJV) – “[29] And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, [30] Save Thyself, and come down from the cross. [31] Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. [32] Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.”

When Christ was crucified on the cross, He appeared helpless and powerless. He seemed to have lost, and those who crucified Him thought they had won. They celebrated because they had successfully killed Him. They were wrong because, on the third day, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Therefore, He was victorious over sin and victorious over death. Faith in God will always win.

Don’t fear to obey God’s commandments (including the Sabbath) because you fear that you will end up as a loser. Faith in God will always make you a champion.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, give me the courage to worship and serve you at all times, during good and bad times. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

What are some of the situations you encounter that make it difficult to obey God? Write them down and ask God to give you victory over them.

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CHAPTER 39

FAITH IN GOD REQUIRES A PLAIN DECLARATION

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I'm a stranger and a pilgrim on this earth,

For they that say such things make a plain declaration,

This world is not my home, even though I've lived in it since birth,

We should look forward to a better city that has no temptation.

I love God with all my heart,

I love everything that God has created,

I will do all I can and play my part,

Everywhere I go, even if I get hated.

The gospel has a message so tremendous,

If we go to Jesus, we shall receive the glorious crown,

God wants us to be the first and to be above and to be the lenders,

He wants us to go to heaven, where there will be no frown.

I will do everything in my ability,

To spread the gospel to all nations,

I will use my time, effort, money and creativity,

May God help me to do it with the best of intentions.

Hebrews 11:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. [14] For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

Most people who showed tremendous faith in God did not receive the ultimate promise of eternal life. However, they strongly believed that God is not a liar (Numbers 23:19) and that He will fulfil that promise when the right time comes.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:13 (KJV) – "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The heroes of faith lived knowing that this world was not their home. They were passing by.

They understood their true home was heaven and the earth was a temporary place to sojourn. It is like going on a campout or a vacation for a week, two weeks, or even a month. When going there, you don't carry all the belongings from your house because you are going to stay there temporarily. You don't take all the clothes from your wardrobe when going there. You carry what you think will be essential for temporal survival.

Hebrews 11:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: [10] For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Abraham was one of the heroes of faith who declared that he was a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. How did he make that declaration? He made it plain, not merely by the words he spoke but by how he lived. In the land of promise, he did not get too comfortable and did not allow himself to sink in the luxury it provided. Instead, he was dwelling in tents. While he was there, he desired a better country. The land of promise was good but not good enough for Abraham.

As a child of God, you should be lofty in ambitions because the closer you get to God, the higher your mind becomes because it gets uplifted to meet the mind of God. Therefore, when non-believers are satisfied by the best the world has to offer, a believer should look beyond, hoping to enter through the pearly gates of that glorious city.

Does this mean Abraham did not work and all he did was to idly wait for the second coming of Jesus? There is a common mindset entertained by some Christians that one waiting for the second coming of Jesus needs not to work or go to school and that one needs to sell all that they have to be ready for Jesus' second coming. A couple of times when false prophets and teachers misled people to believe that Jesus was coming at a certain time, people stopped working, they stopped sending their children to school, and they sold all that they had, only for their hopes to be broken when Jesus did not show up at that specific date or month or year.

The fourth commandment says in Exodus 20:8-9 (KJV) – "[9] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [10] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work."

God tells us to keep the Sabbath day holy, which is only one day of the week, the seventh. However, He does not stop there. He goes ahead to tell us what we need to do for the remaining six days of the week before Saturday (the seventh day) arrives. He tells us, "Six days shalt thou labour." This is not a suggestion. It is a command. We are to labour for six days, doing our best in our God-given purpose, and then rest on the seventh day.

"Let every true, honest-hearted worker be encouraged to work on, keeping in view the fact that everyone will be rewarded as his works have been. Work with an eye single to the glory of God. Do not refuse to bear responsibilities because you have a sense of your weakness and inefficiency. God can give you strength and wisdom if you are consecrated to Him and keep humble. Let none through slothfulness refuse to work; and let none rush ahead, urging his service when it is not wanted." – Counsels on Sabbath School Work, Page 70.1, Ellen G. White.

"Let every true worker be grateful to God that he is honored in having an opportunity of working for the Master. Watch for opportunities to do good and improve the talents God has given you, seeking grace daily that you may succeed in doing good." – Counsels on Sabbath School Work, Page 70.2, Ellen G. White.

The Bible records in Genesis 13:2 that Abraham was rich in cattle, silver and gold. He was rich in material things because he diligently worked for them while trusting in God, and God blessed the work of his hands. One way to declare that you desire a better country and are a child of God is by working diligently and faithfully in all you do.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (KJV) – "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This verse tells us that while we are on this earth, before we receive the promise of eternal life, we must do our best in all we do.

Making a plain declaration that we are Christians goes beyond words. The third commandment says in Exodus 20:7 (KJV) – "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." One way of taking God's name in vain is by claiming that we are Christians but living a life opposite our proclamation. Our lives must be vividly and distinctively a plain declaration of what we profess.

Hebrews 11:4 (KJV) – "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Abel embraced God's promise and made a plain declaration through his righteous actions. He offered God the sacrifice that He required even though it cost him his life. He did not live long after he pleased God since he died shortly after. He was not taken to heaven as he is in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the saints when Jesus Christ comes back. However, his life was a plain declaration that he was a stranger and a pilgrim in this world.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

By faith, Noah declared plainly that he was a stranger and a pilgrim in this world by how he lived. Everybody else was minding their own business, and he singlehandedly took on God's work with solemnity amidst the evil and the ridicule that was ongoing in the world. He obeyed God's command by building an ark. He used the exact materials that God told him to. Making a plain declaration is doing exactly what God tells you to do and how He has told you to.

Cain did what God told him by bringing a sacrifice, but he did not get the sacrifice that God wanted. Saul killed all the Amalekites that God told him to, but he spared the king and the fat animals. Luke 19:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. [6] And he

made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." Zacchaeus surrendered to Jesus completely by doing exactly what Christ told him to, and he received salvation. To get saved, we ought to offer ourselves fully to God. As Christians, our lives should reflect the image of God. That is how we make a plain declaration.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me make a plain declaration that this world is not my home, by the words that I speak and my actions. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Do your neighborhood friends and people know you are a Christian?
- How are you making a plain declaration that you are a Christian? List some of the ways.

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CHAPTER 40

FAITH IN GOD GIVES POWER

Faith in God gives power,

Faith in God should be practiced every hour,

Faith in God makes sweet fruits that were once sour,

Faith in God makes us conquer and devour.

Faith in God gives us a blessed promise,

Faith in God pulls us from the dark abyss,

Faith in God puts everything at ease,

Faith in God is boosted by prayer on bended knees.

Faith in God is more beautiful than a rose flower,

Faith in God is a strong tower,

Faith in God makes blessings shower,

Faith in God gives us the courage not to cower.

Faith in God makes us win,

Faith in God makes us overcome sin,

Faith in God makes us keen,

Faith in God gives us peace within.

1 Corinthians 15:14 (KJV) – "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

Christ's resurrection shows how powerful He is. Various people in the Bible raised people from the dead just like Christ did. For example, Peter and Paul. Therefore, as much as it is a mighty miracle, it is not a unique wonder. However, Peter and Paul are now dead, and they are not able to raise themselves. Christ raised Himself. This shows how exceedingly great the power of Jesus is. Therefore, the gospel of Jesus is powerful.

If Jesus could raise Himself from the dead, there is nothing He can't do. Someone sick can receive healing after listening to a man of God preaching or a gospel musician singing because that preaching is backed up by divine power. Sermons and songs that lift Jesus and focus on Him alone will be able to do unusual things because God's great power backs them up.

God's divine might is expressed in the resurrection of Jesus because it is a power that gives life to the dead. Abraham's loins and Sarah's womb were dead, but God's Word gave them life. God rewarded their faith with unusual power. Our faith is vain or empty because we do not believe that Jesus has the power to enable us to conquer all challenges.

Philippians 2:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. [9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; [11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christ humbled Himself unto death. He humbled Himself even to the most painful and humiliating death, the death of the cross. People insulted Him, laughed at Him, mocked Him, spat at Him, and injured Him physically, among many other humiliating things, but He did not revenge. He did not do anything to showcase His power to them. He endured all these for our salvation.

Usually, when someone treats us with contempt, our carnal nature tries to prove to them that we are higher than what they perceive us to be. If someone insults us, we try to think of a worse insult than that which they have used on us so that we can win them. Many people work hard in life to achieve success to prove wrong the people who once esteemed them lowly.

Christ is different from us. Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV) – "8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

If Christ reasoned the way we do, we would all be dead and forgotten. Jesus lived a life of humility, and through Him, He made us understand the nature of God. God is the humblest being in the universe. The Bible says as a result of His humility, God exalted Jesus and gave Him a name above every name. Humility gives power. It takes faith to be humble.

"There is a picture representing a bullock standing between a plow and an altar, with the inscription "Ready for either"—ready to toil in the furrow or to be offered on the altar of sacrifice. This is the position of the true child of God—willing to go where duty calls, to deny self, to sacrifice for the Redeemer's cause." – Lift Him Up, Page 247, Ellen G. White.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (KJV) – "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Jesus was rich but came on earth as a poor person so we could be rich. He uplifted us from a state of powerlessness to a state of power. Through His grace, He showers us blessings that we don't deserve.

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes, we are healed." – The Desire of Ages, Page 25.2, Ellen G. White.

"By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His Word. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His

shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. It is the "Son of man" whose name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love" – The Desire of Ages, Page 25.3, Ellen G. White.

The resurrection of Jesus should strengthen our faith. Our faith should not be weak and empty because we believe in a God who possesses infinite power. Christ was treated as we deserve so that we might be treated as He deserves. Through Him, we inherit marvelous blessings, including eternal life.

Luke 19:10 (KJV) – "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The work of salvation is also a work of restoration. However, His death and resurrection have achieved more than the restoration of the damage that sin brought to this world.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV) – "[19] and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power [20] which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places."

The infinite power of Christ backs up those who choose to believe in God. As the Bible describes, the power that backs us up is exceeding great. Unfortunately, few believers know this, and the Devil takes this opportunity to torture them relentlessly. Once we believe in God and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we get that power immediately.

God gives us the ability to overcome the vilest temptations. His power helps us overcome the most dreadful addictions. His power enables us to keep all the commandments, including those we never imagined keeping. His power helps us overcome evil traditional practices. Some people cannot keep the Sabbath because they were born into families that do not observe the Sabbath. Hence, they find it challenging to adopt a new practice.

Once Jesus saves us, He makes it easy for us to obey all His commandments, including the Sabbath. He gives us the power to overcome the temptation of intemperate eating, evil movies and secular music among others. It is a blessed decision to give yourself to Christ. It is a decision that needs faith. If we have faith, we will inherit all this power.

The Bible says in Romans 8:37 (KJV) – "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." We are not conquerors; we are more than conquerors. We are not about to conquer; we have already conquered. Let us have faith that we have already won the battle.

What are some of the practices that hinder our access to God's power?

- Unbelief which leads to sin.
- Lack of praying.
- Lack of Bible study.
- Spending time watching and listening to secular content.

Philippians 4:13 (KJV) – "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

I can do nothing without God. I can do everything with God by my side. In the days of Moses, the magicians could replicate some of the wonders that Moses did but not all of them. When Moses made a snake from his rod, the magicians did the same thing, but Moses' snake ate all the snakes. We should believe in God and seek Him as our source of strength and not seek other evil forces. God's power is above all power.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
We come before you with hearts full of gratitude for the power that faith in You bestows upon us. May our faith be unwavering, practiced every hour, minute, and second, and may it transform our lives. As we reflect on the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, grant us the strength to overcome challenges, the humility to follow His example, and the wisdom to seek Your power in all aspects of our lives. May our faith in You be a source of blessings, courage, and peace within. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Activity

Write down one thing that you would like God’s power to help you overcome or achieve. Pray over it.

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CHAPTER 41

FAITH IN GOD IS MOVING FORWARD NOT BACKWARD

Faith in God is moving forward,

Faith in someone or something else is moving backward,

Faith in God is choosing the right thing,

Faith in God is everything.

Faith in God means no looking back,

Faith in God is believing in God and not in luck,

Faith in God will shield you from the worst attack,

Faith in God is going forward; He will always have your back.

Faith in God means taking a bold step ahead,

Our bodies a living sacrifice from the toe to the head,

Faith in God is shown in love that never fades,

Faith in God is an active service, like daily making the bed.

Going forward with God will always lift you up,

Going forward with God makes you never give up,

Going forward with God is the most curing syrup,

Going forward with God is like the sky that's always up.

Hebrews 11:15-16 (KJV) – "[15] And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. [16] But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

God is not a God who forces. He is a God who gives us free will to choose whom to serve. Joshua 24:15 (KJV) – "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." God has given us the freedom to choose whom to serve.

Deuteronomy 30:19 (KJV) – "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

God has given us freedom to choose between righteousness and evil, blessing and cursing. Some people think that you cannot choose to be blessed and that blessings and curses are always determined by luck or fate. Deuteronomy 28:1 gives us a condition and tells us that if we diligently hearken to God's voice and obey all His commands, we shall surely be blessed. Therefore, it is possible to choose to be blessed. Unfortunately, many people choose curses.

We must make individual decisions from the depths of our hearts to serve God. Those heroes of faith in the Bible who chose to follow Christ had an opportunity to lose hope on their journey and go back, but they did not (Hebrews 11:15-16). Their journey was not always smooth. Nevertheless, they stuck to it wholeheartedly and carried on courageously amidst the trials.

One such example is Lot. The Bible records in Genesis 19:16 (AMP) – "Lot hesitated and lingered. The men took hold of his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, because the Lord was merciful to him." Lot hesitated and lingered because he wanted to remain in Sodom, a beautiful and fertile land. We are often reluctant to give our lives to Christ because sin seems attractive and pleasurable. As a result, we rob ourselves of beholding things that are more attractive and pleasurable.

Lot continued with the journey when the men took hold of his hand. God is willing to hold our hands at every step of the way. As a result, Lot was saved from destruction. 2 Peter 2:7-8 (KJV) –

"[7] And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: [8] (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)" The Bible calls Lot a righteous man. This means that Lot was saved from destruction and eternal death, which sinners will receive.

The angels did not only hold Lot's hand; they also held his wife's hand. While Lot was saved from destruction, his wife was not. His wife looked back when they were clearly commanded not to look back. As a result, she turned into a pillar of salt. When talking about looking back, the Bible says in Luke 17:31-32 (KJV) – "[31] In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. [32] Remember Lot's wife." Faith in God focuses on what's ahead and forgets what is behind. Faith in God means going forward with God and not looking back.

Various people in the Bible faced temptations. However, they did not allow the temptations to derail them and make them lose eternal life. They would sin today, ask God for forgiveness, and rely on God's strength to keep going forward.

Exodus 20:8 (KJV) – "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

The fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8 starts with the word remember. Christians should always remember to do everything right in God's sight. When God said the word remember while issuing this command, He had in mind that human beings forget so quickly. We feel delighted to be in God's presence when we go to church on Saturday or Sunday after the preacher has preached. We feel like we've been dipped in a sweet and comforting sea of holiness, and that feeling makes us think that we will no longer sin. After leaving church or after the Sabbath is over, we get into our regular daily duties, and it does not take long before we realize that we have fallen again into temptation.

Carrying your Bible to school or work and reading it every now and then will keep us in check and will enable us to remember what God requires us to do. Having God's Word constantly on our minds will give us freedom over evil because it all starts in the mind. We tend to forget something or someone because of losing touch with that person or thing. If I take your contacts today and fail to reach out, I will easily forget you. If I take a pen or anything else, put it somewhere, and fail to access it for a long time, I may forget where I placed it.

However, it is challenging, if not impossible, to forget someone you keep on talking to daily. People forget many things, but very few forget their phones because they are constantly on their phones.

The Sabbath day is one day of the week, the Seventh, but the Sabbath principle applies daily. We should never forget God. We should always talk to God, not just when asking for something. We should have a habit of thanking God all the time. Thank God when you are trying to solve a problem and have found a solution. When you encounter a challenge, before you find a solution, thank God for allowing it to come to you because it is meant to make you better than you were before.

The same way, we can call a friend and say, "I was just calling to say hi to you." It is the same thing we can do with God. My friend Moses once posted, "God is not someone to be afraid of; He is someone to be a friend of." What I think he meant is God is not someone from which to timidly keep a distance. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV) says, "Pray without ceasing." We need to always be in communion with God by praying and studying God's Word.

We should have a love for the Word of God. It is rare, and it should not be so, for Christians to study the Bible. Some say they do not read it because they do not understand. The more we read it, the more we will understand it, and the more we keep it away on the shelves, the more we will not understand it. It will be a profitable activity when you are somewhere waiting for something to take out your Bible and read, even if it is the Bible on your phone. When in a long queue waiting for the train or the bus or in the airport, it will be best to take out your Bible and read. This action will help keep your mind occupied and give the Devil no chance to attack you through an idle mind, as we all know the common saying, "An idle mind is the Devil's workshop."

"The profusion reigning everywhere gave birth to luxury and pride. Idleness and riches make the heart hard that has never been oppressed by want or burdened by sorrow. The love of pleasure was fostered by wealth and leisure, and the people gave themselves up to sensual indulgence. "Behold," says the prophet, "this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good." Ezekiel 16:49, 50. There is nothing more desired among men than riches and leisure, and yet these gave birth to the sins that brought destruction upon the cities of the plain. Their

useless, idle life made them a prey to Satan's temptations, and they defaced the image of God, and became satanic rather than divine. Idleness is the greatest curse that can fall upon man, for vice and crime follow in its train. It enfeebles the mind, perverts the understanding, and debases the soul. Satan lies in ambush, ready to destroy those who are unguarded, whose leisure gives him opportunity to insinuate himself under some attractive disguise. He is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 156.2, Ellen G. White.

If we refrain from idleness and put God at the top of our minds, we will always move forward and never backward. Philippians 2:13 (KJV) – "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." When we surrender ourselves totally to God, the Holy Spirit will work in us. God will enable us to lose an interest in sin and to gain a love of righteousness, which will keep us moving forward because "Righteousness exalteth a nation (Proverbs 14:34, KJV)."

Hebrews 11:15-16 (KJV) – "[15] And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. [16] But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

The Christian who has his eyes and his mind upward, always focusing on God, understands that there is something better than the best this world offers. Such a person has a vision for more incredible things that are not yet seen and does not put his focus on the lowly things that may seem great. Such is a man who is after God's own heart. Such is a man of faith. Faith in God is moving forward with God, not backward.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to always move forward with you and prevent me from backsliding. Help me lose interest in those things that are pulling me backward. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Take your time and list the things holding or pulling you back in your Christian life. Ask God to help you to lose interest in them.

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CHAPTER 42

TRUE FAITH SHOULD NEVER LOOK BACK

True faith should never look back; in God we trust,

God's power created man from the ground's dust,

Faith will govern the lives of those who are just,

To please God, faith is not optional; it is a must.

True faith should never look back; we run the race,

The race we run by faith, tis God who sets the pace,

When we forge forward by faith, our lives He'll bless,

Shun doubt completely; doubt ends lives in a mess.

True faith should never look back, God's love won't cease,

When we act by faith, Faith in God in us will increase,

When we match with God, Satan's plans and attacks will freeze,

For God owns everything; all in heaven and earth is His.

True faith should never look back; in God we confide,

When we obey God, in His loving arms, we abide,

God takes us seriously. He doesn't want us to take him for a ride,

If we live faithfully, blessings will come like a mighty wind or tide.

Hebrews 11:15 (KJV) – "[15] And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. [16] But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

The heroes of faith were not mindful of their past because they desired a better country. Faith should never look back. It should not look right or left; it should only look forward. Many of us are saved but still remember the things we used to do before we got saved and wish to return to them.

When God called Abraham to go to a foreign land, God told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's land to a land that God would show him (Genesis 12:1-3). He obeyed God, not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). He did not regret leaving his original home. He had the opportunity to return because family and culture are very dear to most people, but he did not. Instead, he looked for a city with foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). He knew that happiness on earth is temporary. He chose to sacrifice temporary pleasure for eternal happiness.

Genesis 19:17 (KJV) – "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Lot and his family received an instruction from God to escape from the city of Sodom. God commanded them not to look back. They did not wholly know their destination, but God knew. God knew He had prepared a better place for them than they already had.

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of the increased wickedness in those cities, and He wanted to end that wickedness. In that wicked city, Lot and his family found favor in the sight of God, and God desired to save them from its destruction. Therefore, He expected them to flee and not look back because looking back would slow them down and make them desire to return to that morally polluted city. Lot's wife did not heed this instruction. She looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).

God desires us to be forward thinkers always. He desires us to have a laser-like focus in whatever we do. There is a reason God created our eyes at the front of our faces and not at the back of our

heads or sideways. This is because what lies ahead is more important than what lies behind and on the side. The windscreen in a vehicle is always larger than the side mirrors and the interior rearview mirror. Besides the windscreen, other mirrors are rarely used. Drivers only use them when changing lanes or reversing.

The average or slowest runner will outdo the fastest runner who keeps looking back. Therefore, this applies not just to moving physically but also to moving spiritually. Many backslide because of looking back. Many go back to sins that they had once left because of looking back at the pleasures they enjoyed while they were in that sin. They don't look forward to the glory that lies ahead. God may save someone from a life of robbery, but they start looking back, desiring the easy money they used to get. Christ may save someone from a life of fornication and masturbation but start treasuring sinful memories.

Looking back slows down our spiritual progress. Not only does it slow down our spiritual progress, but it also slows down our health, academic, social, mental, and financial progress because spiritual progress impacts all these. Many have ruined their lives by returning to toxic relationships they had once left.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) – "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." When Christ saves us from our sins, we become a new creation. Therefore, our lives need to differ significantly from our past lives before encountering Christ. When Christ performed various miracles, He changed the past conditions of the people He performed miracles on and gave them new conditions.

For example, when He healed the blind, He changed them from a lack of vision to a condition of vision. Therefore, it was logical to expect them to do things differently because they had gained the ability to see. If they used sticks to guide them where to walk, they would no longer be valid because Christ gave them vision. When Christ healed the lame, He gave them the ability to walk. He moved them from a state of immobility to a state of mobility. Those who could not walk were blessed to walk everywhere they desired to. Therefore, they had no excuse for not going around to preach the gospel because God gave them the ability to walk.

An encounter with Christ is not merely for improvement but for complete transformation. There should be a notable significant difference between the past you and the present you. Matthew 5:16

(KJV) – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify you Father which is in heaven.”

People need to marvel at you because you have declared that you desire a better country and city. Looking back erases the work of infinite love Christ has done for you. It takes you back from positive transformation to stagnation or degradation.

It is like, someone who Jesus once healed of blindness, taking a knife and cutting off their eyes, returning to the state of blindness. It is like someone who was once lame and has been given the ability to walk, take a machete, and cut their legs. We can also liken it to wearing a dazzling clean white garment and rolling oneself in the mud. It is like dressing up in your favorite outfit and diving in the sewage to swim. These examples may sound too bizarre, but sin makes your life worse than all these examples.

Luke 9:62 (KJV) – “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Jesus told this to a man who requested to go back and bid farewell to the people at his house (Luke 9:61) after He had requested the man to follow Him. Christ understood that if the man goes back to do that, he may be discouraged by the people at his house or delayed. He knew that the few minutes or hours of going back to bid farewell would make the man miss some of the blessings (By the way, if church service starts at 8:00 and you arrive at 8:05, you’ve missed five minutes of divine blessings.

The tragedy is if you have done that for a long time, you may not know what you are missing until you start doing things the right way). Jesus told the man that whoever looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. God has prepared a beautiful place for us all. Ellen White writes that Heaven is more glorious than you can imagine. John the revelator could not fully capture the glory of Heaven in the minds of the readers of the book of Revelation. Someone who looks back is not fit for that glorious city because they are already comfortable in this dilapidated, degraded, and disastrous world.

Some of the Reasons Why People Look Back

Uncertainty of the future – Many are unaware of the blessings God has in store for them, and therefore they desire to go back. In Genesis 12:1-3, when God commanded Abraham to get out of his country and his family to a land that the Lord would show him, Abraham did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). However, he trusted that the Lord was going to take him to a better place than he was before.

As a result, God blessed him because of that act of faith. If he had disobeyed, He would not have experienced those blessings. Uncertainty robs us of numerous blessings from God. God convicts you that the Seventh Day is the Sabbath, but you are uncertain of your future since you have a job that requires you to work on Sabbath. God calls you out of a particular sin, for example, drinking alcohol, but you are uncertain of your future without those friends you used to drink with.

Challenges they face when moving forward – When the Israelites faced hunger in the wilderness, they complained and desired to be taken back to their life of slavery in Egypt. They argued that in Egypt, they had all the food they needed (Exodus 16:2-3).

God was giving them a better place than Egypt, a land with milk and honey where they would be liberated (Exodus 3:8). The few challenges that the Israelites faced in the wilderness made them willing to forfeit the enormous blessing that God had in store for them.

Esau's hunger might have been extreme (Genesis 25:32 (KJV) – Behold, I am at the point to die), but the birthright he despised (Genesis 25:34) was bigger and better than the food he exchanged for it. Heaven can't be compared to the best this world can offer, but we choose this world rather than Heaven. As we move forward in our Christian lives, numerous challenges are coming.

Be prepared to face opposition from your family and friends. Be prepared to face opposition from church members. People will consider you to be insane for choosing the righteous path like they considered Noah. However, all these challenges you face will combine to produce something beautiful.

Romans 8:28 (KJV) – "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Not every individual thing is good, but all things combined will work out for good for those who love God. When you try to eat plain rice alone, it may not taste that good, but when you combine it with stew, it tastes better. All things combined will work out together for good. Bread alone doesn't taste good to most people, but it tastes better when you make a sandwich (combine it with other things). Therefore, do not fret because of your challenges when following Christ. Together they will result in something good.

Sometimes change is difficult to implement – People want change, but very few are willing to embrace it. This is because change compels you to get out of your comfort zone. It prompts one to get out of what they were used to and get into something new. Change is sometimes very uncomfortable. It was uncomfortable when Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). It was uncomfortable when Abraham was commanded to get out of his country and from his family (Genesis 12:1-3).

When God introduced circumcision (Genesis 17:10), it was uncomfortable. It was uncomfortable when Joseph was sold into Slavery in Egypt by his brothers (Genesis 37). It was uncomfortable when Joseph was thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit (Genesis 39). It was uncomfortable when Moses took the Israelites from Egypt to the wilderness (Exodus 14). It was uncomfortable when God allowed the devil to take away all that Job had, including his health (Job 1&2). It was uncomfortable when Jesus died on the cross (Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19).

When Christ changes you, it may not always be comfortable, but it is more than worth it. When God gives us a transition, He often makes us pass through the wilderness, prison, or crucifixion experience to prepare us for the noble and magnificent things ahead. You may have been accused falsely at work and lost your job, but God leads you to open up a business that provides thousands of jobs to people.

Your heartbreak may lead you to write a poem or compose a song that will encourage millions of people and, in return, make billions of money out of it. You may have tarmacked in search of a job, but God leads you to open a Multinational Corporation. You may fail in class, but God ends up changing your failure into success, like Dr. Ben Carson.

Let God work in your life, and the results will be astonishing. Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV) – "For I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Ask God to guide you through the change He is taking you through, and tell Him to give you the grace and strength not to look back.

Looking back should never be an option for a converted Christian. Isaiah 43:18 (KJV) – "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old." When memories of sin come to you, making you have a desire for that past deplorable life, pray against them. Instead of remembering past things, focus on future things. This is what God promises in Isaiah 43:19 (KJV) – "Behold, I will do a new thing."

The only thing you should remember is God's commandments because this is your entire duty (Ecclesiastes 12:13). For example, Exodus 20:8 (KJV) – "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

When you remember the Sabbath day, you will acknowledge that God is your Creator (Genesis 2:1-3), your Savior (John 3:16), and your Sanctifier (Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:12). If you remember the Sabbath day, you will acknowledge that you are dependent upon God. He who used His word to bring the entire universe into existence will use His word to bring the future you desire into existence.

Therefore, do not remember the past unless you are using it to evaluate how you can better your future so that you don't repeat the same mistakes. Forget the 'goodness' that evil once brought you in the past but don't forget the past miracles that God did to your life (Deuteronomy 5:15 (KJV) – And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm).

Philippians 3:13 (KJV) – "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

"No one will make any upward progress without persevering effort. He who would overcome must hold fast to Christ. He must not look back, but keep the eye ever upward, gaining one grace after another. Individual vigilance is the price of safety." – Maranatha, Page 47.4, Ellen G. White.

Hold fast to Christ. Do not look back.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to never look back to my past life of sin. Please help me to accurately evaluate my past experiences and derive valuable lessons from them. Lord, guide me as I move forward and help me overcome all challenges that may come with moving forward.

Activity

- Write down the mistakes that you made in the past and make a decision not to repeat them.
- Write down the past evil things that you want to go back to and pray over them, asking God to help you not to get back to them.
- Write down the challenges you face when living a Christian life and ask God to help you overcome those challenges.

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CHAPTER 43

WHEN GOD IS NOT ASHAMED

Love God more than money, power or fame,

Make it clear that you love Jesus without feeling shame,

Love everyone, even the poor, sick and lame,

When you do that, God will be proud, He will not be ashamed.

Everything, visible or invisible, was formed by God's Word,

God made our lives easy, but sin made our lives hard,

Let's open our hearts to God, and we will always be glad,

If we live by His Word, God will not be ashamed, and our lives will be at guard.

When God is not ashamed, He will give us a new name,

The old is gone with all the stains and all the shame,

When God is not ashamed, we improve, doing away with all that's lame,

When God is the captain, we shall always win the game.

God is not ashamed of those who desire a better country, a heavenly,

God will reveal to you so much if you seek Him earnestly,

He will show you things that you never knew, even what's in mystery,

When God is not ashamed, He will make you the best that you can ever be.

Hebrews 11:15-16 (KJV) – "[15] And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. [16] But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

God is not ashamed to be called a God of people who have wholeheartedly surrendered to Him. God is not ashamed to be called a God of people who have an honest desire to climb up the staircase or ladder of righteousness. As a result of God not being ashamed, the Bible says in Hebrews 11:16 (KJV) – "For he hath prepared for them a city." When God is not ashamed to be called your God, He prepares good things for you.

"More Glorious than we can imagine – The lion, we should much dread and fear here, will then lie down with the lamb, and everything in the New Earth will be peace and harmony. The trees of the New Earth will be straight and lofty, without deformity." – Heaven, Page 133.1, Ellen G. White.

Heaven is beyond our wildest imaginations and expectations. When God is not ashamed to be called your God, He gives you things that are beyond your wildest anticipations and fantasies. In this world, it is unimaginable to imagine a lion and a lamb staying together in peace and harmony. The lamb will run away from the lion, and the lion will eat the lamb if it comes close to it, but in heaven, it will not be so.

Revelation 21:18-21 (KJV) – "[18] And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. [19] And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; [20] The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. [21] And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

How many of you have ever seen a wall made of jasper? How many of you have ever seen streets made of gold and gates made of pearl? I once saw a small hand bracelet that is made of pearl being sold in Hong Kong for around one million U.S. Dollars. That is a hand bracelet, how much would an entire gate to a city that is larger than this world cost? The most magnificent and expensive buildings in this world have their foundations made of common rock.

Heaven has its foundations made of some of the rarest precious stones on earth. Most of us have never seen the twelve listed rocks that make the foundation of heaven in large quantities. Usually, when we see these precious stones (which are very rare), we see them in small amounts. A gram or a carat of one of these stones is very expensive.

Heaven is more beautiful than the most beautiful places on the earth. It is more spectacular than the Taj Mahal in India. It is grander than the Eiffel Towers in Paris or the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. It is more pristine than the Whitehaven beach in Australia. Its appearance is more magical than the Fairy Pools in Scotland. More breathtaking than the Grand Canyon in the United States of America and more picture-perfect than the Huacachina in Peru.

We have seen beautiful paintings from legendary artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Johannes Vermeer, Rembrandt, Gustav Klimt, Andy Warhol, Salvador Dali, Jackson Pollock, Henri Matisse, Frida Kahlo, Caravaggio, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Raphael, Egon Schiele, Edward Hopper, Edvard Munch among many great others. All these artists took a great deal of time to create their masterpieces. However, all their paintings combined are far from the beauty of heaven.

We have heard good-sounding music from the likes of Beethoven, Johan Pachelbel, Mozart, Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, The Beetles, Bob Marley, Mahalia Jackson, Cece Winans, Kirk Franklin, Whitney Houston, Luther Vandross, Lionel Richie, Boyz 2 Men, Lucky Dube, Joseph Hill, Shaggy, Nicole Scherzinger, Jay-Z, Tupac, Nas, Vybz Kartel among many creative others. All their music combined does not come close to the music that will be played in heaven.

This is because no matter how perfect something on earth seems to be, it still has an element of error or imperfection since we are living in a sin-tainted world.

“In the land of fadeless day, Lies “the city four square;” It shall never pass away, And there is “no night there.” – No Night There, Hymn by John R. Clements. Heaven is a place that has no darkness. Heaven is perfectly perfect and flawlessly flawless. Those whom God is not ashamed to be called their God will access it and all the good things that come with it.

Luke 9:26 (KJV) – “For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.”

Some people know what is right but are unwilling to do it because they are ashamed of what their friends will think or say about them. People get into harmful habits of drinking and drugs in their teenage and youthful years because they want to fit in. Some people in government offices and high positions of authority engage in corruption deals when presented to them because they do not want to look foolish before the eyes of those offering them those deals.

Some people are lured by peer pressure in their various workplaces, and so they live beyond their means so that they can be at the same level as their workmates. Some students go to classes on Sabbath because they are ashamed to look less intellectual and enlightened. Some eat and drink things that they know are unhealthy because they do not want to seem out of place. When we obey God and put Him above everyone else without feeling ashamed, God will not be ashamed to be called our God.

Don’t be ashamed of God, and God will not be ashamed of you. Have faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to love and embrace you and never be ashamed of you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

In your personal notebook, write down things that you may be doing to please other people that go against God’s commands. Pray over them, asking God to help you overcome them.

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CHAPTER 44

A TEST OF FAITH

The test given to Abraham was not an easy test,

It was a test of faith to prove if he had faith or was faithless,

The test given to Abraham made him more blessed,

For he took God's Word seriously and was not careless.

How many can pass such a challenging test?

Can you cling to God and believe that He is the very best?

God is asking you to depend on Him to give you rest,

You shall have peace and joy if in Godliness you take interest.

God's test to Abraham had a purpose; it was not aimless,

The tests we get daily are meant to lead us to greatness,

We shall overcome them if we set aside prayerlessness,

The tests God gives us will lead us to excellence.

Faith in God is obeying Him even when it is not convenient,

God shuns the proud and honors the humble and obedient,

Have faith in God, even when you see no meaning yet,

God is powerful, more than a mighty warrior or president.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (KJV) – "[17] By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, [18] Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: [19] Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

God told Abraham that it is through Isaac that Abraham shall receive innumerable descendants. After God gave Abraham Isaac, He told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham might have wondered how God promised to bless him through Isaac while still expecting him to give Isaac as a burnt offering to God. This request might not have made sense to Abraham. However, Abraham did not let such thoughts derail him from fulfilling God's purpose. He was quick to obey God. He did not allow thoughts of doubt to linger in his mind. The Bible records in Genesis 22:3 that Abraham rose early in the morning.

Genesis 22:2 (KJV) – "And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

God commanded Abraham to take his son. If God left that command at that point, Abraham would have taken Ishmael since Ishmael was also his son. Abraham would have had the option to sacrifice his servant Eleazar since he also regarded him as his son. God chose to be specific and told him to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise, the son of faith.

Isaac was gotten when Abraham and Sarah were very old. He was gotten when both of them were past the age of having children. Before getting Isaac, they had diligently and fervently prayed to God for a long time, and God seemed to have delayed their prayers. They had served God for a long time because Abraham was called by God when he was seventy-five years old and got Isaac when he was one hundred years old. Thoughts of giving up might have crossed their mind as they were only human. After getting Isaac, God tells Abraham to take Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering.

Genesis 22:3 (KJV) – "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

Despite Abraham loving his son, he did not delay. He rose early in the morning. When God gives you work to do, embark on it immediately. Delay increases doubt, while immediate action boosts faith. Wake up early in the morning to work on your purpose. Rising early in the morning by 5 AM or before 5 AM gives you a tranquil environment to work on your purpose because almost everybody else is asleep at that time. We have often heard of the popular saying, "the early bird catches the worm."

If Abraham had woken up late, he might have gotten discouraged by his wife, Sarah, or other people. Something might have happened in the course of that day to prevent him or to derail him from carrying out his God-given mission. I have personally experienced when I wake up early, I am able to accomplish so much compared to when I wake up late. Early mornings usually have no distractions.

Whenever I rise early, I feel more energetic to carry out duties till late at night. However, when I wake up late, I tend to feel tired and unwilling to do anything. In the book, The 5 AM Club: Own Your Morning, Elevate Your Life, Robin Sharma writes, "Take excellent care of the frontend of your day, and the rest of your day will pretty much take care of itself."

Procrastination is Satan's most effective weapon that he uses to ensure that God's purpose is not fulfilled. This weapon is deadly in the battle between light and darkness. In the great controversy between good and evil, evil prevails when men and women procrastinate to do that which God has called them to do.

It may not seem harmful when you say, I will do this after one hour (while you have the time to do it), or I will do this tomorrow. A little delay makes the task appear to be bigger than it really is. When Satan sees that you have deliberately chosen to delay, he brings in more distractions to ensure that you do not get back to the task.

The more you entertain delay, the more your life keeps on getting harmed. Some have earnestly prayed to God for a financial breakthrough. God answers their prayer by giving them a business idea. Unfortunately, they procrastinate on it. As a result, poverty and less financial freedom keep on holding them down. Some have prayed for God to enable them to get close to Him. God answers their prayer by sending someone to suggest to them to study the Bible or to serve in the church. They delay, and as a result, sin keeps on pulling them down.

We need to be careful about some of the things that people suggest to us, even though sometimes those suggestions may not look so serious. If those suggestions are in accordance with the will of God, we should take them as commands and be quick to do them. Before I started my blog, my friend Moses suggested to me to post spiritual material on social media. I was not so cognizant of God's voice at that time, and therefore, I did not take his words seriously.

When I started doing individual Bible study, I found it profitable to be sharing what I have learned every day on social media. After I started sharing, about two or three friends suggested I start a blog; that is how I ended up starting gettruthgetlife.com.

After starting the blog, some people have suggested that I should start a podcast, while some have suggested that I should write books. The blog has made me get invited to various places to preach God's Word. Once I go to those places, more opportunities to serve God keep showing up, and in return, I get blessed. Truly, the harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few. Many have not been able to reap the harvest that God has in store for them because of delay.

Some quotes that can help to motivate you against delay:

"Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life." – Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment.

"The more you are focused on time-past and future-the more you miss the Now, the more precious thing there is." – Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment.

"The longer, I avoided the task, the larger it appeared and the greater number of reasons I saw for it being impossible." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

Abraham did not go alone with his son. He took two extra men to assist him. God's work will be easier when we cooperate with others compared with doing the entire work alone. When you give someone an opportunity to serve God, you are giving that person a chance to be a blessing and a chance to be blessed by God.

Genesis 2:18 (KJV) – "And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone."

God wants us to collaborate. In John C. Maxwell's book, The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communications, the eminent leadership coach writes, "Groups are often smarter than the smartest

people in them." In the same book, he also says, "No one person has all the answers." Former NFL Coach Bill Parcells says, "Individuals play the game, but teams win championships."

Other quotes on collaboration:

"It makes a big step in your development when you come to realize that other people can help you do a better job than you can do alone." – Billionaire American Industrialist and Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

"Great thoughts are birthed out of many good thoughts." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

"Collaboration has a multiplying effect. It is like the difference between one plus one which is two and one beside one which is eleven." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

"We should not only use all the brains we have but all the brains we can borrow." – Former U.S.A President Woodrow Wilson.

"The best ideas added together give you a breakthrough." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

"An idea does not have to be your idea to be good." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

"Ideas are birthed during times of collaboration. Ideas are proved during times of action and ideas are improved during times of reflection." – The 16 Undeniable Laws of Communication, John C. Maxwell.

John C. Maxwell was playing golf with his editor, Victor. Victor told him about a book he had read called The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing. He suggested to him that he can do the same and write about laws of leadership. That is how John C. Maxwell got the idea to write The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, which is now the best-selling leadership book of all time. God wants you to collaborate.

Abraham collaborated with two young men to assist him in the mission. We need more young men and women to help in the spectacular work of spreading the gospel.

1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV) – “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

In fulfilling God’s purpose, nobody should be despised. Each person is very important to God. Therefore, everyone should be highly regarded by us. When people tried to block the little children from coming to Jesus, Jesus forbade them from doing so. Jesus spent time together with people who were regarded as the worst sinners. He socialized with poor people and people who were meant to be outcasts, such as leprous people.

Human beings put various barricades on people regarding their age and social status, not God. I have heard various people say that the minimum age for a child to be baptized is age twelve. Such assertions are unbiblical. The Bible does not specify the minimum or maximum age that qualifies someone to go to Christ.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV) – “Let no man despise thy youth.” It is quite common to get despised by human beings because one is young. However, one should not cease fulfilling God’s purpose because of the contempt, mockery, or ridicule that comes from people.

Satan uses people who treat you with contempt as a distraction to make you get discouraged and to stop you from improving your life and the lives of others. As a young man or woman, you need to have steadfastness of purpose in your God-given endeavors. Be a worthy example to everyone in everything that you do. Everyone alive has a role to play in this world. Therefore, no one should be underrated or sidelined. We should view everyone the way God views them.

John 6:9 (KJV) – “There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”

The young boy with five barley loaves and two fish was used as an instrument by God to feed a multitude of more than five thousand people. He might have appeared insignificant because of his young age. What he was carrying also appeared immaterial when Andrew asked, “What are they among so many?” The Bible says in John 6:6 (KJV) – “For He Himself knew what He would do.” Before Jesus sought the opinion of Philip and Andrew, He already knew what He would do. He knew He was going to use that young boy miraculously with the little that he had to feed the whole multitude. A little goes a long way when backed up by God’s provision.

If you are a young person who is fully devoted to God, God will do great things through you. It does not matter whether you are in kindergarten, primary, high school, or college. It does not matter whether you are highly educated or not. God can use you, as little as you are, with the little that you have to do big things that are beyond your size, strength, intellect, and age.

The young boy with five barley loaves and two fish witnessed the power of God working through Him to bless an entire multitude because he was at the right place. A question to young men and women is, "Are you at the right place?" If the boy had been at the club or in a casino, he would not have witnessed God's power. He would not have encountered God, making him great to the extent that his story is read till today.

Jeremiah 1:6-7 (KJV) – "[6] Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. [7] But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

God told Jeremiah his purpose when he was very young, and He expected him to embark on it immediately. Jeremiah told God that he cannot speak because he was a child. God did not accept that excuse. He told Jeremiah, "Do not say that you are a child." God was telling Jeremiah that young age is not an excuse. He was telling him that one cannot be too young to serve God. Even a toddler who cannot walk or talk has a place in the service of God. Never have age as an excuse for not doing what God has told you. In fact, you should not have any excuse at all. Distractions may come frequently, but be dependent upon God's power to overcome them.

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 (NKJV) – "[9] Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. [10] Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity."

Childhood and youth only last for a short time. In most countries, childhood is usually from zero to eighteen years. A person who lives up to the age of seventy (the average lifespan) will have fifty-two years as an adult and eighteen years as a child. The years of one's youth are fleeting; they go so fast, and before you realize it, you are no longer a youth. Therefore, it is wise for one to use those years when they have sufficient energy to serve God diligently.

Worshipping God and serving Him are not as boring activities as many think them to be. Not only is there peace that surpasses understanding, but there is also great joy when one serves God. The closer you get to God, the happier you become. Pastor Olunga Otieno says, “The man who walks in the way of sinners is in hell even before he physically goes to hell.” Life’s challenges do not have as much weight in the hearts of believers as they do on unbelievers. Therefore, as a young person, you need to rejoice in your youth. You should have great delight when working for God. If you do that, you will encounter true happiness, and you will add value to your life as well as the lives of others.

Genesis 22:5 (KJV) – “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.”

Hebrews 11:17-19 (KJV) – “[17] By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, [18] Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: [19] Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

“Abraham was full of faith when he spoke to the young men who were with him. He believed that both he and Issac would return; that we will come back, and he told them so. This does not mean that Abraham somehow knew this was only a test and God would not really require this of him. Instead, Abraham’s faith was in understanding that should he kill Isaac, God would raise him from the dead, because God had promised Isaac would carry on the line of blessing and the covenant.” – Enduring Word Bible Commentary, David Guzik.

Abraham understood that God is not a man and that He cannot lie. He understood that God fulfills His promises, and when He says something, He will do it. God had promised to bless Abraham and make a multitude from him that was as innumerable as the stars of the sky or the sand on the seashore. Having interacted with God for a long time, Abraham knew that there is no command that God gives which does not result in a blessing. Therefore, he knew even this tough command that God gave him of killing his son would result in a blessing in the end. He understood that God is not only the giver of life, but He is Life itself. He knew that once he sacrificed Isaac, God could raise him again since nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37).

"He left his servants at some distance off (v. 5), lest they should interpose, and create him some disturbance in his strange oblation; for Isaac was, no doubt, the darling of the whole family. Thus, when Christ was entering upon His agony in the garden, he took only three of His disciples with Him, and left the rest at the garden door. Note, it is our wisdom and duty, when we are going to worship God, to lay aside all those thoughts and cares which may divert us from the service, leave them at the bottom of the hill, that we may attend on the Lord without distraction." – Matthew Henry Bible Commentary, Matthew Henry.

"Distraction follows intention." – Myron Golden. Anytime you are embarking on something that will make you successful, you will face lots of distractions. Do everything in your power to ensure that you are not the one responsible for those distractions. For example, you may have set a specific time of the day to conduct your personal devotion. Do not distract that precious time by going on social media.

Do everything in your power to avoid distraction. The only distractions that should come to you are those that are beyond your ability to avoid. For example, after Jesus had fasted, Satan came to Him to distract Him from His mission. He did not go looking for Satan. Do not go looking for the Devil. Let Him come to you. Too often, we fall into temptation because we go looking for the Devil.

We should be intentional in ensuring that we have done away with all that may divert us from God's service. Sarah was highly essential in the life of Abraham since she was his wife, but she was not essential in the mission of sacrificing Isaac that God had given Abraham. The two young men who were accompanying Abraham were necessary for traveling with Abraham on the journey, which is why he brought them along. However, it was not necessary for them to go to the altar of sacrifice with Abraham and Isaac.

Your phone and other mobile electronic communication devices are necessary in your daily life as they help make communication efficient and effective, but they are unnecessary during church service. Therefore, switch them off or put them in flight mode when in church. Social media is necessary as it helps you get more clients for your business, but it is unnecessary when worshipping God.

Socializing with friends is necessary and beneficial for the betterment of one's life, but it is unessential when the preacher is preaching a sermon. Checking your work emails is necessary to ensure that you don't miss any important communication, but it is unnecessary on the Sabbath day when your entire focus ought to be on God.

Genesis 22:7-8 (KJV) – "[7] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? [8] And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

"Even now he did not murmur against God, but strengthened his soul by dwelling upon the evidences of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness. This son had been unexpectedly given; and had not He who bestowed the precious gift a right to recall His own? Then faith repeated the promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called"—a seed numberless as the grains of sand upon the shore. Isaac was the child of a miracle, and could not the power that gave him life restore it? Looking beyond that which was seen, Abraham grasped the divine word, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Hebrews 11:19." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 151.4, Ellen G. White.

"Yet none but God could understand how great was the father's sacrifice in yielding up his son to death; Abraham desired that none but God should witness the parting scene. He bade his servants remain behind, saying, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." The wood was laid upon Isaac, the one to be offered, the father took the knife and the fire, and together they ascended toward the mountain summit, the young man silently wondering whence, so far from folds and flocks, the offering was to come. At last he spoke, "My father," "behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Oh, what a test was this! How the endearing words, "my father," pierced Abraham's heart! Not yet—he could not tell him now. "My son," he said, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 152.1, Ellen G. White.

Abraham believed that God is the provider because He always provided for him whenever he needed something. We should not delay or fail to do God's work because of lack of resources. We should use what we have and do all we can to fulfill God's purpose. If God finds it necessary to add something to assist in fulfilling His purpose, He will do so. The burnt offering was to be used

at the altar. However, before Abraham and Isaac reached the altar, they still had some walking to do. If they had carried a lamb on the journey, it would tire them because they would have extra luggage to carry.

Isaac did not suggest to his father Abraham to stop the journey because they did not have a burnt offering. After his father told him that God would provide, he was satisfied with that answer, and he continued with the journey. Too many times, we trouble our leaders with doubts and complaints when we realize there are insufficient resources. We would often ask, "How can this be successful, and we do not have this and this?" Abraham and Isaac journeyed on. You should not stop working on your business idea because you do not have the capital to start. God will provide capital for you when you have reached the level that you need it most.

Genesis 22:9-12 (KJV) – "[9] And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. [10] And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. [11] And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. [12] And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

"Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants in all succeeding ages. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God. During that three days' journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised; and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men. He might have pleaded that age should excuse him from obedience. But the patriarch did not take refuge in any of these excuses. Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 153.3, Ellen G. White.

It was when Abraham reached the place that God had told him, and did exactly what God had commanded him that the Lord stopped him from sacrificing his son and gave him a ram for a

sacrifice. Abraham believed that God would provide even before He provided, and indeed, God provided.

God provided for Abraham after he built an altar, laid the wood in order, and put his son Isaac on the altar. In other words, God provided for Abraham when he was fully ready. Are you fully ready to receive the blessing that you are entrusting God for? You are asking God for a spouse; are you ready to receive your future husband or wife? Is your character and personality suitable for the person you are asking God for? Are you the person that you want to be with?

You are asking God for a certain job, are your soft skills and hard skills enough to receive that job? You are asking God for money. Is your character ready to handle that money that you are consistently praying for? The ram would have been a burden to Abraham and Isaac if God provided it before they reached the altar since they would have had to carry it. If God gives you your blessing before you are ready, it will be a burden to you, and it will end up in a curse rather than a blessing.

Genesis 22:15-18 (KJV) – "[15] And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, [16] And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son. [17] That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; [18] And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

God blessed Abraham and gave him a reason for that blessing. The reason was that he did not withhold his son from God. In Genesis 22:2, God addresses Isaac as Abraham's only begotten son whom he loves. By offering Isaac, Abraham proved to God that he was willing to give all he had for God's cause. He had spent a huge amount of his adult life hoping and praying for a child. Some people cannot return tithe or give their money to charity because they have spent years working hard for it. Some people have chosen to be selfish because of reminiscing about the struggles they went through before acquiring money.

Some parents bring up their children poorly by satisfying the child's selfish desires because they waited for a long time before having that child. This also happens in some families where the majority of the children are of the same gender, and there is only one who is of a different gender.

For example, a family that has six girls and only one boy. In such families, the child is treated with uttermost tenderness and given everything they ask for, including what is harmful to them. As a result, the child ends up being irresponsible with habits that become very challenging to correct since they have been nurtured for a long time. This bad character is brought as a result of the parents withholding their child from God. If Abraham withheld his son from God, God would not have given him all those blessings that He gave him.

Malachi 3:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [11] And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

We have missed the windows of heaven being opened for us and the devourer being rebuked for our sake because of withholding our money from God. We have missed various opportunities because of withholding our talents and skills from God. We have missed tremendous blessings because of withholding our lives from God.

Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God." James 2:23. And Paul says, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Galatians 3:7. But Abraham's faith was made manifest by his works. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" James 2:21, 22. There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, "Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law." But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. Said Christ to the unbelieving Jews, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8:39. And concerning the father of the faithful the Lord declares, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and

My laws." Genesis 26:5. Says the apostle James, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17. And John, who dwells so fully upon love, tells us, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." 1 John 5:3." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 153.4, Ellen G. White.

Deuteronomy 28:1 (KJV) – "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth."

Even though God prevented Abraham from slaying his son, God considered Abraham's action as done. He did not do it, but he committed in his heart to do it. He proved this commitment by traveling to the place where God had told them to go for three days with his son and two young men and laying his son on the altar, ready to sacrifice him. If God had not stopped him, he would have sacrificed his son. This action of obedience does not mean he hated his son; it meant that he loved God more.

While God issued that command to Abraham, He told him, "Take your son whom you love." It might have been a painful experience for Abraham to picture his only begotten son, whom they had prayed for such a long time leaving them, but he placed faith above emotions. He placed faith above family attachments. He had a strong desire to please God rather than to please Himself. Most of the problems we are facing in the world today would be gone if the desire to please God was stronger in men and women than the desire to please themselves.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I surrender everything in my possession to you. Teach me how to use everything that you have given me for your glory and the blessing of your people. Please help me to overcome all challenges with your divine power. Help me overcome all distractions that distract me from my purpose. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Write down the challenges that you have faced this week. Have you been able to overcome them? Reflect on how God enabled you to overcome them. The ones you have not been able to overcome, ask God to help you overcome.
- What is that one thing that you hold so dearly to? Surrender it to God.
- Who is that one person that you hold on so dearly to? (might be your child, friend, spouse, parent) Surrender them to God.
- What are some of the distractions you face while serving God? Serving God is not just in church, it can be at your workplace. Prayerfully brainstorm methods that you can use to overcome those distractions.

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CHAPTER 45

FAITH IN GOD LOOKS INTO THE FUTURE

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Faith in God lives and leaves a legacy,

A child of God should have vision beyond what the eyes can see,

Thou shalt not worry about how the future shall be,

Place your life in God's hands and see how beautiful it will turn out to be.

Living a legacy is all about giving,

John Maxwell says giving is the highest form of living,

When you give, blessings in your life you are weaving,

Because giving is more blessed than receiving.

Faith in God is hoping for a brighter future,

Believe that God who loves you wants to make you super than super,

Your future will be sweeter than honey and sugar,

The faith that looks into the future makes you a sharpshooter.

Bless your children and all that you love,

God will make these blessings come true like rain from up above,

God's Word shall not return to Him void,

Trust in God's Word and all other words avoid.

Hebrews 11:20 (KJV) – "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

Isaac blessed his sons Jacob and Esau. These were the blessings given to them:

Blessing of Jacob

Genesis 27:28-29 (KJ21) – "[28] Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. [29] Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Isaac blessed Jacob with the following blessings: the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, plenty of corn and wine, many servants and nations to bow before him. These were both spiritual and material blessings.

Many well-intentioned Christians will pray for you to receive blessings such as a good family, a good marriage, a job to get you by and getting closer to God. Rarely will they pray for you to get great material wealth because they are deceived that abundance in material wealth is sinful. Some might even pray that you do not make much in material wealth.

Isaac did not shy off from proclaiming great material wealth to his son Jacob. He blessed him with the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth. Heaven is above while the earth is below. Heaven is vertical while earth is horizontal. Therefore, we can say that Isaac proclaimed blessings to come to Jacob from all directions.

When rain pours down, there is no guarantee that the rain will surely cause plants to grow. In many instances, it does, but not always. Isaac blessed Jacob for heaven to shine blessings upon him and to receive the results of those blessings (the fatness of the earth).

Some people have blessings proclaimed on them, but they never receive the fruits of those blessings. For example, when someone prays for you to succeed in your business, you need to have opened a business. When someone prays for you to succeed in getting more customers, you need to be selling something. Your faith is revealed in action.

Isaac blessed Jacob to have plenty of corn and wine. Corn (grain) and wine were staple products, essential for survival and well-being. This part of the blessing ensures that Jacob would have a continuous and abundant supply of food and drink.

Food and drink are basic needs, others being shelter and clothing. Therefore, we can also say that Jacob would have a plentiful supply of basic needs. It is not wrong to have food in abundance. It is not wrong to have clothes in abundance and it is not wrong to have many houses. In fact, it is better to have everything in abundance than in scarcity, especially if one is using them for God's glory.

Isaac blessed Jacob with political and social blessings. "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee." This indicates a position of authority and power. The blessing suggests that Jacob and his descendants will be leaders, with other people and nations recognizing their dominance and submitting to them. It speaks to a future where Jacob's lineage would hold significant influence over other nations, possibly foreshadowing the emergence of the nation of Israel and its prominence.

"Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee." This part of the blessing refers specifically to Jacob's relationship with his brother Esau and possibly the broader family. Despite being the younger sibling, Jacob is granted superiority over Esau. It reflects the reversal of the typical order of inheritance, where the older son would normally hold a higher position. The mention of "thy mother's sons" emphasizes the division between Jacob and Esau, confirming Jacob's preeminence within the family.

The leadership mantle given to Jacob by his father Isaac was not to merely exercise authority and have 'fun' trampling over people. It was to have a righteous influence among people. God desired that through the influence of Jacob many nations would be drawn to Him. This is the blessing that God Himself gave Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, when He promised that through Abraham, all nations of the earth will be blessed.

God desires that His children (Christians) to be the leaders in whatever field that they are in so that people in those fields can be drawn to Him. For example, Dr. Ben Carson is a Christian leader in the field of medicine and neurosurgery. Through his stupendous influence, many people have converted to Christianity.

Isaac blessed Jacob with divine protection. “Cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.” This part of the blessing provides divine protection and favor. It implies that anyone who opposes or harms Jacob will themselves be cursed, while those who treat him well will be blessed. This is not just true for Jacob alone, but it is true for all genuine Christians. Whoever does good to a servant of God receives abundant blessings, but whoever does evil to them receives curses in abundance. Many people have welcomed calamity in their lives because of disrespecting people of God.

This echoes the covenant God made with Abraham (Jacob’s grandfather) in Genesis 12:3, where God promised to bless those who bless Abraham’s descendants and curse those who curse them. This places Jacob under God’s special protection and favor, ensuring that his enemies will not prevail against him.

Blessing of Esau

Genesis 27:39-40 (AMP) – “[39] Then Isaac his father answered and [prophesied and] said to him, “Your dwelling shall be away from the fertility of the earth And away from the dew of heaven above; [40] But you shall live by your sword, And serve your brother; However it shall come to pass when you break loose [from your anger and hatred], That you will tear his yoke off your neck [and you will be free of him].”

Wherever Esau shall dwell there will be the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven from above. The blessing given to Esau of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth was closely like that of Jacob but not the same. At first glance, Esau’s blessing might seem similar to the blessing given to Jacob, but the context suggests it is not a promise of abundant prosperity like Jacob’s.

Instead, this may imply that Esau’s descendants will live in regions that are harsh and arid, yet they will still find ways to survive. The “fatness” and “dew” may be sparse, meaning that while they will have some resources. However, they will not enjoy the same level of abundance as Jacob’s descendants.

Some interpretations suggest that this refers to Esau’s future dwelling in Edom, a mountainous region that was less fertile than the lands promised to Jacob but still provided some sustenance.

God's resources are unlimited. There is room for everyone to have material/financial prosperity. Everyone can be rich. Envying someone because of his material possessions is lack of understanding.

John 14:1-3 (KJ21) – "[1] Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in Me. [2] In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Jesus tells us that there are many mansions in His Father's house. He does not say houses. He says mansions. In simpler terms, a mansion refers to a very big house. What is recognized as a mansion in a small village cannot be recognized as a mansion in a metropolitan city. What is recognized as a mansion in a third world country cannot be recognized as a mansion in a place like Beverly Hills or Malibu or Bel Air. What is recognized as a mansion in those three mentioned places in America is nothing when compared to the mansions prepared by the One whose mind is as high as heaven is from earth.

So, we can be sure that the heavenly mansions prepared by God for us are infinitely greater, more beautiful and larger than all magnificent buildings that have been built by human beings. The God of abundance doesn't talk about one mansion or countable mansions. Instead, He mentions many mansions. How many? Very many to fit everyone that God has ever created and has not yet created.

Another example of God's abundance was Noah's ark. Noah's ark was extremely huge, but Noah and his family were the only people who got in. God had desired that other people should get in, that is why the ark was so huge. But they did not. I hope we won't have the same case when Christ comes back for us the second time.

God has more than enough for each one of us. There is no need to feel jealous of your neighbor, no need to covet, no need to steal and no need to use scrupulous means to get what your heart desires.

Genesis 27:38 (AMP) – "Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." Then Esau [no longer able to restrain himself] raised his voice and wept [loudly]."

After Jacob tricked Esau and took away his blessing, Esau asked Isaac to bless him, but Isaac told him that he was not able to as Jacob had taken away his blessing (Genesis 27:35). Many negative things are often said about Esau but let us give him his due for one good trait. Esau did not give up. Instead, he asked his father if he was left with at least one blessing (Genesis 27:38). This is a powerful lesson of persistence. Milk the cow after you have milked the last drop.

Esau might have gotten his trait of persistence in the field as he was a hunter. While hunting, it is not always easy to catch prey. You must be persistent in your hunting efforts. Apply this principle to every good thing you do, and you will be blessed beyond your wildest dreams. Esau's efforts bore some fruit. Some fruit is better than no fruit. Myron Golden says, "Little profit is better than no profit."

"Fatness of the earth and dew of heaven." At first glance, this might seem like the blessing given to Jacob, but the context suggests it is not a promise of abundant prosperity like Jacob's. Instead, this may imply that Esau's descendants will live in regions that are harsh and arid, yet they will still find ways to survive. The "fatness" and "dew" may be sparse, meaning that while they will have some resources, they will not enjoy the same level of abundance as Jacob's descendants. Some interpretations suggest that this refers to Esau's future dwelling in Edom, a mountainous region that was less fertile than the lands promised to Jacob but still provided some sustenance.

"And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother;" By thy sword shalt thou live: This indicates that Esau and his descendants will lead a life characterized by conflict and warfare. They will need to rely on their strength and military prowess to survive, often having to fight for their existence and resources. This reflects a life of struggle, where peace and prosperity are not attained easily.

Isaac told Esau that he will serve his brother. This part of the blessing confirms the prophecy that Esau (and his descendants, the Edomites) will be subordinate to Jacob (and his descendants, the Israelites). Historically, this played out as the Israelites often dominated the Edomites. The phrase reflects the reversal of the expected order, where the older son (Esau) would typically rule over the younger (Jacob), but instead, the opposite occurs.

"And it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." This suggests that there will come a time when Esau's descendants gain temporary

independence from Jacob's descendants. Although they will serve Jacob, there will be moments when they will successfully rebel and assert their freedom.

God is fair. He rarely subjects those who rebel against Him to eternal doom unless they prove to be consistently stiff-necked. God might punish you now but ends up blessing you the next minute. Time and chance happen to everyone (Ecclesiastes 9:11). God gives everyone time and chance including the sinners. So, no one can have an excuse and say that God has never shown him love.

The Edom nation, descended from Esau. It is deeply connected to the blessing Esau received from Isaac in Genesis 27:39-40. This blessing outlined both the future struggles and occasional triumphs of Esau's descendants. Esau settled in the region of Seir, south of the Dead Sea, which later became known as Edom (Genesis 36:8). This mountainous region was less fertile compared to the land of Canaan but provided enough resources for Esau's descendants to establish themselves. The Edomites became a significant group, often mentioned in the Old Testament. They were known for their skill in warfare, as foreshadowed by Isaac's words: "By thy sword shalt thou live."

During the period of the Kings of Israel, Edom was often a thorn in the side of the Israelites. They gained strength and even dominated trade routes, including the King's Highway, which was crucial for commerce in the region. The Edomites at times asserted their independence, successfully rebelling against Israelite control. For instance, during the reign of King Jehoram of Judah, Edom revolted and established its own king, breaking free from Judah's control (2 Kings 8:20-22). This reflects the part of Esau's blessing where it was said that Esau's descendants would eventually "break his yoke from off thy neck."

Despite periods of independence, Edom was often subjected to Israelite control. For instance, King David conquered Edom and placed garrisons throughout the land, subjugating the Edomites under Israelite rule (2 Samuel 8:13-14). The prophet Obadiah prophesied the downfall of Edom due to their pride and their betrayal of Israel during times of distress (Obadiah 1:1-4). This prophecy aligns with the historical decline of Edom as they were repeatedly defeated by neighboring powers.

During the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 586 BC, Edom allied with Babylon against Judah. However, this alliance did not bring lasting success to Edom. The Edomites were later conquered by the Nabateans, who forced them to move from their homeland to southern Judah.

By the time of the New Testament, the Edomites, now known as Idumeans, had largely lost their national identity and were absorbed into other cultures. Herod the Great, an Idumean, ruled Judea as a client king under Roman authority, but this was a far cry from the independence and power they once had.

Edom eventually disappeared as a distinct entity. After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans. The Jewish population assimilated the Edomite remnants and other surrounding cultures, effectively ending Edom as a separate nation. God lifted Edom but through the course of their actions (their pride), they brought their own downfall.

“Break his yoke from off thy neck.” A yoke symbolizes subjugation and control. The promise here is that Esau’s descendants will not remain perpetually under Jacob’s control. There will be times when they throw off this “yoke” and assert their independence. Historically, this occurred when the Edomites revolted against Israelite rule during periods of Israel’s weakness.

Isaac’s blessing to Esau reflects a mixed future. While Esau’s descendants will survive and even experience periods of independence and prosperity, their lives will be marked by struggle, conflict, and a subservient relationship to Jacob’s descendants. The blessing lacks the permanence and comprehensive favor granted to Jacob and emphasizes the hardships that Esau and his lineage will endure.

This blessing highlights the consequences of Jacob’s earlier deception and the fulfillment of God’s earlier prophecy to Rebekah that “the elder shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). However, it also offers Esau a measure of hope that his people will not always stay under Jacob’s control and will eventually find moments of freedom and self-determination.

Jacob and Esau were the sons of Isaac. Isaac proclaimed blessings upon their lives concerning future things. Faith is being mindful of the future, not just of the present. Isaac knew that Jacob and Esau would enjoy most of those blessings after he is dead, but he still went ahead and blessed them. True faith in God requires one to look beyond his lifetime. Looking beyond one’s lifetime is an integral step in leaving a legacy. The legacy that one should leave is not one that is aimed at elevating oneself but one that elevates God.

In his sermon, “The righteousness of thinking big,” Bishop Wayne Malcolm talks about thinking generational. He says that thinking generational is one of the three major facets of thinking big.

The others are: Thinking gigantic and thinking global. As servants of God, we should think generational in whatever God calls us to do.

Some of the problems we are facing now are because our parents, grandparents and ancestors did not think about the future. They were only concerned with ‘at the moment’ things. Some of our ancestors might have married many wives and failed to plan well. So, after they died family conflicts started happening. Others got involved in alcoholism and spent all the money they had on alcohol. This behavior often leaves the family in a state of destitution.

Other people worked good jobs, earned a decent income but did not fully pursue their purpose. As a result, their families are not as financially free as they ought to be. Look at people who started businesses and pursued their purposes in whatever area in life, their families are very comfortable across the generations. If your father, your grandfather, your great grandfather, and your other ancestors did not think generationally, do not blame them. Take the initiative now and start thinking generationally.

Start making decisions that will not only impact you but will impact future generations. Not just future generations from your bloodline but future generations from the entire world. If you are speaking and writing, communicate a message that will be relevant to future generations.

If you want to address a current issue, make sure in that message there is something that future generations will relate to. The same thing with music. Look at how timeless hymns and classical music are. Make music that is timeless. In your business, make products that are timeless and always be innovating, adopting the latest technologies.

Blessing of the Sons of Joseph

Hebrews 11:21 (KJV) – “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

Proverbs 13:22 (KJV) – “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.”

Jacob followed his father's example and blessed his children too. When your earthly parent leaves an inheritance for you, make sure you leave an inheritance for your children. Even if they don't leave an inheritance, leave an inheritance for your children.

Tangible/material wealth is amazing, and God created it for our physical sustenance. However, the greatest inheritance and the best gift that a person can give someone are spiritual blessings. Material gifts can run out of supply while spiritual gifts can never run out of supply. Spiritual blessings bring material blessings, but material blessings cannot buy spiritual blessings.

It is important for fathers and mothers to create time to share with their children the Word of God. Such inheritance is higher and better than physical property. It will be of no use to give your children physical property that they cannot manage because they are not well grounded in God's Word. However, when you teach them God's Word, they will be able to get other material goods when calamity happens to the ones you had left them with.

Isaac was rich in material goods, but he gave his sons Jacob and Esau spiritual blessings. Jacob was rich in material goods, but he gave his sons spiritual blessings. These patriarchs might have left their vast material possessions to their children, but the Bible does not emphasize on them the way it emphasizes on spiritual blessings. This is because spiritual blessings are higher.

Jacob gave his sons various blessings and cursed some of them, mentioning each of them by name in Genesis 49. God deals with us the same way. He places us in communities and families, but He deals with us as individuals. Though the firstborn, Reuben's instability and past sin prevent him from excelling (Genesis 49:3-4). Simeon and Levi were condemned for their violent nature, and their descendants would be scattered in Israel (Genesis 49:5-7).

Judah received a blessing of leadership and strength. His descendants would produce kings, and eventually, the Messiah (Genesis 49:8-12). Zebulun would dwell near the sea and be a haven for ships (Genesis 49:13). Issachar was described as a strong worker. Issachar would submit to forced labor, possibly due to the attractiveness of the land (Genesis 49:14-15).

Dan would be a judge among Israel, but also a serpent, symbolizing treachery and guerrilla warfare (Genesis 49:16-18). Gad would face attacks but will ultimately overcome his enemies (Genesis 49:19). Asher would enjoy prosperity, producing rich food fit for royalty (Genesis 49:20). Naphtali was compared to a free deer, symbolizing eloquence and swiftness (Genesis 49:21).

Joseph was abundantly blessed with strength and favor from God, surpassing his brothers in blessing (Genesis 49:22-26). Benjamin was likened to a ravenous wolf, signifying his descendants' warlike and victorious nature (Genesis 49:27). Each blessing reflects the future character and fate of the tribes that would descend from these sons of Jacob.

Hebrews 11:22 (KJV) – "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Let us go to where the story of Joseph giving a commandment concerning his bones is:

Genesis 50:22-25 (KJ21) – "22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house; and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, "I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 And Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Joseph went to Egypt when he was a young child. He went to Egypt when he was below eighteen years old (Genesis 37:2, Genesis 41:46). He became second in command in Egypt after Pharaoh when he was thirty years old (Genesis 41:46). He got a wife from Egypt and married in Egypt. He got his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in Egypt. He lived and died in Egypt at the age of 110.

He had more beautiful experiences in Egypt than he had in Canaan his homeland. All this shows that chances were very high that his connection with the land and the people of Egypt was stronger than that which he had with his people and his original land. Lots of people from third-world countries are not willing to go back to their homes when they experience greener pastures in countries that are better than theirs.

Joseph understood that the place he was in despite the greener pastures and the exaltation he received was not his home. A spiritual lesson to Christians. Christians should learn that no matter the number of good things that this world offers them, no matter the exaltation that they gain from this world, this world is not their home. This world is not our home. We are just passing by.

Joseph looked into the future and blessed his lineage. He looked into the future and prophesied freedom to the Israelites, assuring them that God will deliver them. He also looked into the future and told them to carry his bones out of Egypt because he understood that Egypt was not his home. Faith in God looks into the future. Faith in God seeks a better home, a heavenly one.

Was Joseph's Command Obeyed?

Exodus 13:19 (KJV) – "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."

Joseph died at the age of 110 (Genesis 50:26). The Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years before the Exodus (Exodus 12:40-41). Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 7:7). If the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years and Moses was 80 at the time of the Exodus, this means Moses was born 350 years after the Israelites first entered Egypt (430 – 80 = 350). Joseph died at 110 years old, and the remaining years (430 years total – 110 years of Joseph's life = 320 years), minus Moses' age at the time of the Exodus, gives us 64 years. Thus, Moses was born approximately 64 years after Joseph died.

While leading the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, Moses obeyed Joseph's command and carried his bones. Most of us are afraid of viewing dead bodies, let alone touching them. Moses went out of his way to pick up the dead body of a man who had died many years ago before he was born and carried it. It is like a person born in 1997 going to look for the dead bones of a person born in 1933 and carrying them.

Moses might have felt uncomfortable doing that but his respect for the patriarch caused him to disregard his feelings. Your love for the men and women of God should go beyond your feelings. You should be willing to do the best for them even when you don't want to.

As we have seen, Moses was born around 64 years after Joseph had died. So, we can conclude that Moses did not know Joseph physically. Neither did Joseph know Moses. The question is, how did Moses know that Joseph had said that? Moses knew that Joseph had said that through the learning of truthful historical events. Take as much time as possible to learn the truth because it is truth that

makes you free. When you learn the truth and abide by it, you will live in freedom, peace and harmony because it is truth that sustains you.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 (KJV) – "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten."

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (KJV) – "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Joseph had no idea whether the Israelites would obey him and carry his bones or not because the dead know nothing. This did not stop him from giving them the command. As a teacher or a preacher of the Word of God, it should not be your business to worry whether the people will obey the Word of God that you are teaching them or not. Your job is to teach. Teach and let the Holy Spirit do His work of transformation.

Think of the Future

As a parent, give instructions to your children with faith that they will obey those instructions. As a parent, bless your children and have faith that those blessings will one day fall upon them. When I was around five years old, my dad told me that I would be an engineer. Years later, I was given a scholarship to study a Master of Science degree in Mechatronical Engineering from Obuda University in Budapest, Hungary.

When I was around eleven years old (in grade 6 or class 6), my class teacher from Laiser Hill Academy, Mr. Kimeu, prophesied that I would be a Managing Director. At that time, I did not take him seriously because I did not know how it would happen. Years later I started my own company Real Biz Digital and gave myself the title Executive Director. One of my business mentors advised me and told me to drop the title Executive Director because Executive Director is used for non-profit companies and instead take the title Managing Director. That is how I ended up being the Managing Director of Real Biz Digital.

"This Child Will be Great." That is the autobiographical book for Liberia's and Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In that book she states that when she was born a villager (most likely a stranger) passed by her house while the newborn baby was being celebrated and

said, “This child will be great.” She ended up being the first African female president in Africa and while writing her autobiography book she called it, “This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa’s First Woman President.”

Speak blessings into your life and into the lives of others. Also be as kind to as many people as you can. If you do that and they end up hating you or underrating you, God will punish them and bless you. Such are the ones that God will set a table for you before them. On the other hand, some may end up blessing you because of the kind acts that you have done to them.

Some may be pleased with you but may not even pray for you because they are not prayerful people. Even if they do not pray for you, things will go well in your life because they are pleased because of the righteous things that you did to them. Reuben missed his father’s blessings because of doing evil to his father. Esau missed his father’s blessings because of not keeping time. Always be grabbing opportunities for the future and look into the future because faith in God looks into the future and leaves a legacy.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, we come before You placing our lives in Your divine hands. Bless my future, the future of my family members and the future of all my loved ones superabundantly. Give us the proper direction to do what is right in your sight. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down how you would want your future to look like and say blessings to it.
2. Write down how you would want your children’s future to look like and say blessings to their lives. You may even go ahead and give them names that reflect those blessings.
3. Write down how you would want your other loved one’s life to be and speak blessings to their lives.
4. Create a schedule for family Bible study.

5. Create a schedule for Bible study with friends.
6. Ask God for direction in guiding your family to a brighter future.
7. Ask God for direction in guiding your mentees (if you have) to a brighter future.

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CHAPTER 46

FAITH RECOGNIZES VALUE

By faith, the parents of Moses recognized his value,

Jesus saw our value, died for us to make us anew,

I will go where Jesus sends me, and you?

Through faith, I and you can be made brand new.

He made us worthy from a state of worthlessness,

He made us strong from a state of weakness,

We should be careful and shun carelessness,

Keeping pride away, embracing utmost meekness.

Faith in God recognizes the value in what seems valueless,

Faith in God gives a great name to what was once nameless,

Faith in God makes faithful what was once faithless,

Faith in God gives color to the colorless.

Obedience to God turns us from catastrophe,

For God rules everywhere, both land and sea,

Faith in God turns trash and ash into a valuable trophy,

God's Word made everything, including whales and dolphins.

Hebrews 11:23 (KJV) – "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

'Because they saw he was a proper child.' This statement is clear that Moses' parents understood the value of Moses. They understood the importance of Moses in that they did not fret about sacrificing the pleasure of having him with them for three months.

Three months is quite a long time for a newborn baby who has just been born to be hidden from his parents. They understood the value of Moses was higher than the King's commandment, which he had issued of killing all Jewish baby boys. They knew they were enslaved people in the land of Egypt, and they had no rights. They knew that their lives would have been in severe danger if the King found out that they had been hiding Moses. However, since they had faith, they were not afraid of Pharaoh. They esteemed God (who is invisible) more than the visible Pharaoh (Hebrews 11:27).

How does this verse apply in our lives today?

- ✓ Many Christians pray, few read the Bible, very few study it, and almost none take time to memorize it because they see no value in doing so.
- ✓ Many people do substandard work and failing to go beyond the bare minimum in their jobs and their studies because they see no value in it.
- ✓ Many Sabbath-keeping Christians are willing to go to jobs on Sabbath because they are afraid they might lose their jobs, while others are willing to do exams on Sabbath because they see no value in keeping the Sabbath as they should.
- ✓ Many Non-Sabbath keeping Christians believe that the Seventh day is the Sabbath but still won't do it because they see no value in it.
- ✓ Many Seventh-day Adventists don't read Ellen G. White's books because they see no value in reading them.
- ✓ Many people dating and courting see no value in abstinence before marriage.
- ✓ Many young people engage in alcohol and drugs because they see no value in keeping their bodies and minds healthy until they get sick or get involved in a tragedy and start regretting it.
- ✓ Many people eat all sorts of things and don't exercise because they see no value in proper health practices.

- ✓ Many of us sin because we have placed a low value on ourselves.

"Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no great object for which to live, no high standard to reach. One reason for this is the low estimate which they place upon themselves. Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves." – Help in Daily Living, Page 43.1, Ellen G. White.

When Moses was hidden for three months from his parents, he was very young. He couldn't even walk. Moses' ministry began when he was around 40 years old. That is quite a long time to wait, especially due to our high level of impatience as human beings. Despite being young, his parents could see his value when he was still a baby.

Many people engage in sin knowingly because they think it will take such a long time for God to come, so they want to continue enjoying the pleasures of this world. Others engage in evil because they are still young, and they don't want to miss anything. They say they will start following God when they get old, not knowing if they will reach that age because we have no guarantee of the next minute or second in our lives.

If Moses' parents had delayed hiding Moses, he would have probably been killed. If he had been killed, the Israelites would have delayed being delivered out of Egypt. God might have spoken great blessings in your life, but you are slowing them when you delay acting righteously. God might have spoken great blessings in your life, but one sin erases those blessings.

Genesis 25:34 (KJV) – "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

Just like Esau, we despise our birthright. In other words, we detest what is ours. To clarify, we see no value in what we already have.

"Be not satisfied with reaching a low standard. We are not what we might be, or what it is God's will that we should be. God has given us reasoning powers, not to remain inactive, or to be perverted to earthly and sordid pursuits, but that they may be developed to the utmost, refined, sanctified, ennobled, and used in advancing the interests of His kingdom." – Help in Daily Living, Page 43.2, Ellen G. White.

Friends, it’s high time we see the value in righteous practices because righteousness EXALTS a nation (Proverbs 14:34). It also EXALTS an individual.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for seeing value in us, even when we felt worthless. Help us to recognize the value You have placed in us and in others. Strengthen our faith to obey You, even when it’s challenging, and to honor the blessings You’ve given us with diligence and care. May we live each day understanding that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, for Your glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Reflect and Commit

1. Write a list of areas in your life where you may have undervalued yourself, others, or God's gifts (e.g., health, talents, relationships, faith practices).
2. Next to each, write one practical action you can take to honor its value. Examples:
    a. **For undervaluing health:** Commit to a healthier meal plan or daily exercise.
    b. **For neglecting spiritual growth:** Set a daily time to study the Bible or memorize verses.
    c. **For relationships:** Reach out and affirm the worth of a friend or family member.
3. **Challenge yourself**: Spend the next seven days actively practicing these commitments, keeping a journal of your progress.
4. After seven days decide if you would you like to continue with these habits.

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CHAPTER 47

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

No VIP access to God's loving heart,

God loves you whether you live in a mansion or a hut,

With faith in God, we should play our part,

Faith unites us with God, making things not fall apart.

In the eyes of God, we stand the same,

No privilege of birth, no worldly fame,

Obedience to God erases all shame,

God's power brings change and makes you never be the same.

It matters not your race or name,

Your status, wealth, or earthly claim,

God wants us all to win the game,

To save us all, Jesus came.

No scales of gold can weigh your worth,

No Maybach, no Range, no Bentley, no Wraith,

No physics, no chem, no biology, no math,

It can give you access to the new heavens and the new earth.

No titles, riches, or ranks on high,

Can buy you respect from the Most High,

No money, no jewel, no girl, no guy,

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The treasures of God, nothing can buy.

Hebrews 11:28 (KJV) – "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

This verse is an essential text for those who say we can freely sin and break God's commandments since we have been saved by grace, while the Bible clearly says in Romans 6:1-2 (KJV), "[1] What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? [2] God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

The Bible also says in Romans 6:12 (KJV), "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Again it says in Romans 6:15 (KJV), "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Take note that all these texts are in the New Testament and were written after the death of Jesus.

Moses understood who God is. He also understood that they (the Israelites and him) had obtained God's favor not by their good deeds but as a result of the grace of God. However, he did not take that opportunity of grace to disobey God and do whatever he wanted. He understood that the same God who destroyed the firstborns of the Egyptians could do the same to them despite being under grace.

He also understood that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Moses experienced this when he was denied entrance to the promised land due to sins that most Christians of today would consider 'too minor' despite following God and leading His people for all that time.

To express this more clearly, let's go to the story of the sprinkling of blood in Exodus 12. In Exodus 12:13, the Bible says, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt." For God not to destroy them, He had to see the blood on the doors. This means that if an Egyptian person had sprinkled blood on their doors, God would have spared them from that tragedy.

Even if you are an atheist, you are blessed if you do things God's way. That is exemplified well in Hebrews 11:31 (KJV), "By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Rahab hailed from the people that God was going to destroy, but God saved her and her family from that destruction because she did things God's way. Just like Moses, she understood who God was and His infinite divine power.

Exodus 20:8-10 (KJV) – "8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

When giving the Sabbath commandment, God commands the strangers to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. The word stranger means foreigners or unbelievers who are custodians in a believer's home or city. If an unbeliever rests from work on the Sabbath and joins Christians in fellowship, They will get the blessings of the Sabbath.

This concept is seen In Joshua 2:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. [11] And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

Rahab heard, and just by hearing, she obeyed God with fear. She did not wait to see because God would have destroyed her with the rest of the people if she had waited. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." – John 20:29.

Some people have gone to church, listened to sermons, and engaged in Bible study but still don't believe the Word of God. Brothers and sisters, it's high time to act with fear, just like Rahab, Moses, Noah, and many others, before it's too late. Exodus 19:4 (KJV) says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians" God is trying to tell the Israelites, "You have seen with your eyes what I can do to those who don't believe in Me." God was telling them to act with fear and do the right thing, lest He does the same to them or worse. God is telling us the same thing today.

"God is no respecter of persons, but in every generation they that fear the Lord and work righteousness are accepted of Him, while those who are murmuring, unbelieving, and rebellious will not have His favor nor the blessings promised to those who love the truth and walk in it. Those who have the light and do not follow it, but disregard the requirements of God, will find that their blessings will be changed into curses and their mercies into judgments. God would have us learn humility and obedience as we read the history of ancient Israel, who were His chosen and peculiar

people, but who brought their own destruction by following their own ways." — Counsels on Health, Page 141.2, Ellen G. White.

True Christianity is more than merely going to church,

It is yielding your life fully to God and being transformed by the Savior's touch,

It is trusting in God to correct every patch.

Christianity is more than a title,

It is following everything that's written in the Bible,

Being born into a Christian family doesn't make you one,

There needs to be continuous surrender and submission to the Holy One,

The Bible promises if we resist the devil from us, he will indeed run.

Friends, it's time you understood who God is and what He can do. Get saved before it's too late.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we delve into your Word, we are reminded of the unwavering faith of Moses, Rahab, and countless others who understood the depth of your grace. They recognized that your mercy does not grant us a license to sin freely but rather a profound opportunity to live in accordance with your will.

Just as Moses understood that the blood on the doors spared the Israelites from destruction, please help us to comprehend the significance of obedience and faith in our lives. May we not take your grace for granted, knowing that disobedience has consequences even for those under grace.

We acknowledge, Lord, that you are no respecter of persons, and as your Word reminds us, those who fear you and work righteousness are accepted by you. We humbly ask for the wisdom and strength to align our lives with your truth, to walk in obedience, and to fear you in all our ways.

May we not merely wear the title of Christianity but be transformed by your grace, trusting in your guidance to lead us away from sin. Let our lives be a testament to your power and love.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

Activity

- Take some time to reflect on the essay's message about the importance of obedience, faith, and the fear of the Lord in the life of a Christian.
- Consider your own life and your relationship with God. Are there areas where you may have taken God's grace for granted or neglected obedience to His commandments?
- Write down two or three specific areas to make improvements in your faith and obedience.
- Set achievable and measurable goals for each of these areas. For example, if one area is to spend more time in prayer and reading the Bible, set a specific goal, like reading a chapter of the Bible and spending 15 minutes praying every day.
- Share your goals with a trusted friend, family member, or fellow believer. Accountability can help you stay on track.
- Begin implementing these goals in your daily life, consciously growing in faith, obedience, and a healthy fear of the Lord.

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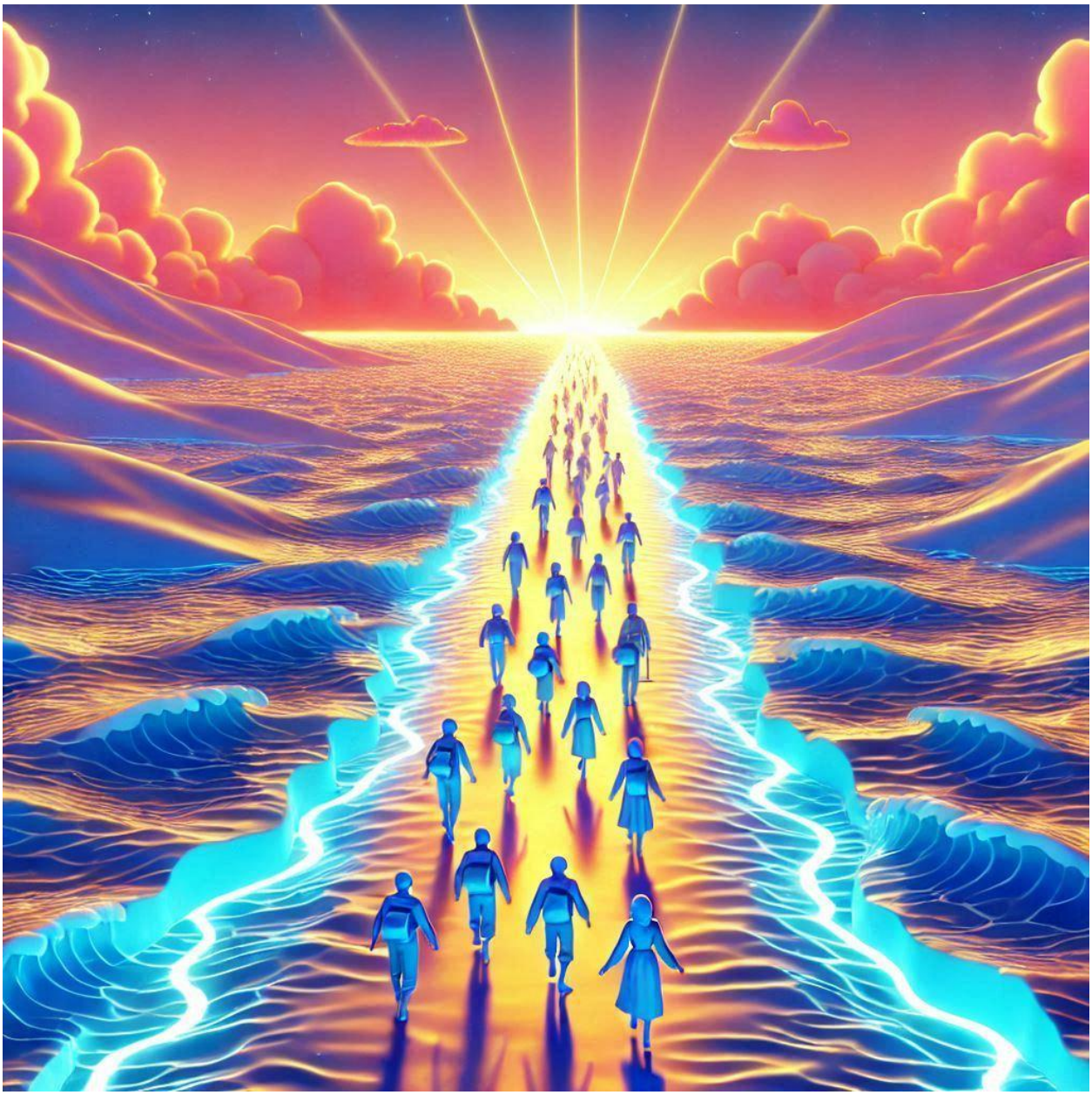
CHAPTER 48

BY FAITH, THEY PASSED THROUGH THE RED SEA



As Moses raised his rod, the sea did split,
God's power on display, His glory lit.
The depths, like walls, around them all around,
A watery path on faith's firm ground.

By faith, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea,
For God made a way in the middle of the sea,
As the waves stood tall and free, a wondrous sight to see.
Escaping from captivity, their spirits flying, wild and free.

No foe could follow, as it would be, their bondage left in history,
They sang with joyful glee in faith, God's love, grace and sovereignty.
With each step in victory, their hearts rejoiced with glee,
If we disobey God, we shall face calamity.

Lack of faith made the once mighty Egyptians drown,
Pharaoh's heart like stone, his pride unwound.
So let this tale from ancient days resound,
A powerful lesson for faith in Scripture found.

Hebrews 11:29 – “By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.”

The Israelites passed through the red sea easily and swiftly. The Egyptians tried doing the same, but the waters closed as they passed and drowned them. This verse is a powerful text to show that God controls everything, including nature. We often think that it is through our education that we are where we are. Other times we think that it is by our best driving skills that we have arrived at our destinations safely.

Countless times we believe that we have been able to overcome a particular problem by the clever tactics we possess. There is no clever tactic, level of education, or talent that the Israelites would have used to escape from the hand of the Egyptians successfully. They needed divine help. Therefore, when God moved, it was clear that God had moved, for the Lord is the Creator of nature and the laws of nature.

Therefore, being above all things with His infinite power, He was able to command nature and favor the children of Israel. “Sometimes God may bring or allow tough situations in your life so that when He moves, it can be clear that God has moved.” – Pastor Randy Skeete.

Another thing we can see from this text is that God has more special blessings for His children than He has for others. This does not mean that God loves some people and hates others. God loves everybody and blesses everybody, but He has special blessings for His people.

In John 3:16, it says, “For God so loved the world (meaning He loves everybody), that He gave His only begotten son (He did this act of love for everybody), that whosoever believes in Him (that is His chosen people), shall not perish but have everlasting life (that is a special blessing to His chosen people only).”

Having established that, there are blessings God can give you as His child but not give others. The Egyptians saw the Israelites passing through the red sea and tried doing the same. They thought that they would easily make it since the Israelites had made it because they were human beings like them. In the Egyptians’ eyes, they esteemed the Israelites to be lower than them by a large extent since they were enslaved people in their land.

They did not know that even though the Israelites had lower earthly physical positions, their spiritual rank was higher than theirs. This danger is likely to face many people because we can never know how high an individual ranks spiritually since the spiritual is invisible, unlike the physical, which can easily be seen.

Acts 3:6 (KJV) – "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Peter and John did not have much material wealth. Therefore, they were not openly flamboyant to attract attention. Despite this, they could heal a lame man and change his situation entirely so that he went from instability to stability. He went from sitting in one place to walking everywhere. They did a miracle that no money could do. They gave the man more than the money he asked for. God will always give you more than you ask for; He will provide you with what you think He can't give you (Ephesians 3:20).

In the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, some men visited Lot and tried to harm his two male visitors not knowing that the visitors were divine. They were struck blind immediately.

Abraham welcomed the visitors with good hospitality, unaware they were angels. He was doing his duty to God and his fellow men. Hebrews 13:2 (KJV) – "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." You may be praying for something, and God brings it to you in disguise, but you bypass it by esteeming some people lowly. That is why pride is very dangerous.

The Egyptians could only see what was external. They could not see what was internal. And what was internal was the Israelites' relationship with God. As a child of God, you can open something, and God blesses it so much, but when an unbeliever tries to do the same thing as you, it fails because God's hand is in your venture but not in the unbeliever's venture.

The Egyptians drowned in the same way someone else may drown when trying to do something God had not commanded. The Israelites swiftly passed through the red sea because they followed God's instructions/Commandments. The Egyptians drowned because they were following their own commandments.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." Psalm 115:1. Such was the spirit that pervaded Israel's song of deliverance, and it is the spirit that should dwell in the hearts of all who love and fear God. In freeing our souls from the bondage of sin, God has wrought for us a deliverance greater than that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Like the Hebrew host, we should praise the Lord with heart and soul, and voice for His "wonderful works to the children of men." Those who dwell upon God's great mercies, and are not unmindful of His lesser gifts, will put on the girdle of gladness and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. The daily blessings that we receive from the hand of God, and above all else, the death of Jesus to bring happiness and heaven within our reach, should be a theme for constant gratitude. What compassion, what matchless love, has God shown to us, lost sinners, in connecting us with Himself, to be to Him a peculiar treasure! What a sacrifice has been made by our Redeemer, that we may be called children of God! We should praise God for the blessed hope held out before us in the great plan of redemption, we should praise Him for the heavenly inheritance and for His rich promises; praise Him that Jesus lives to intercede for us." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 289.2, Ellen G. White.

Seek to follow God, be close to Him, and watch Him move in your life miraculously. You don't have to be the most intelligent, the most skilled, or the most physically beautiful. You need to follow Him and believe in Him unwaveringly. Ecclesiastes 9:11 (KJV) – "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Just as the Israelites followed God's command at the Red Sea, Isaiah 58:13-14 encourages us to honour God's commandments and find delight in doing His will. Obedience leads to blessings and a deeper connection with God.

MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We humbly acknowledge Your divine power over our lives. Like the Israelites at the Red Sea, we rely on Your guidance, not our own understanding. We trust in Your infinite power, understanding that challenges reveal Your hand in our lives.

Thank you for the special blessings reserved for Your children. Help us discern them, even in disguise. We seek to be instruments of Your miracles, recognizing that Your blessings surpass our requests. Guide us by faith, not our own strength or wisdom, so our lives may testify to Your greatness and grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

- Set aside a few minutes each day to reflect on the blessings, both big and small, that you've received.
- Write at least three things you're grateful for daily in your journal.
- As you do this, consider how each of these blessings, like the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea, may not be solely due to your own efforts or circumstances but also reflect divine interventions or favour.
- Reflect on the concept of special blessings for God's children and how you've experienced such blessings.
- Consider how God's power and grace have impacted your life and your ability to overcome challenges.

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CHAPTER 49

CRUSHING THE WALLS OF JERICHO

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By faith, they went round the walls of Jericho,

By faith, they accomplished what had never been accomplished before,

By faith, God loved them and was pleased with them more,

Through faith, they witnessed what faith can do, and their faith did grow.

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down,

By faith, they made Satan and all Demons frown,

By faith, for six days, they went only one round,

On day seven, seven times, the walls of Jericho fell down.

Sometimes, faith can seem like a slow process,

Let us learn to always trust in God, and we shall see success,

When we apply faith, we shall see progress,

Faith can make us kings; faith can make us bosses.

Faith can crush the 'uncrushable,'

Faith can move the 'immovable,'

Faith can fall the 'infallible,'

Faith can stop the 'unstoppable.'

Hebrews 11:30 (KJV) – "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

The walls of Jericho did not fall on the first day, neither did they fall on the third or the sixth day. They fell on the seventh day. God's timing is perfect, better, and more excellent than ours. Psalm 1:3 (KJV) – "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Notice the verse says, 'in his season.' This phrase means that God will grant you all you have been crying for at the right time.

But what should we do to get God's promises? What should we do for the walls/hindrances in our lives to fall, just like the walls of Jericho?

"In obedience to the divine command Joshua marshaled the armies of Israel. No assault was to be made. They were simply to make the circuit of the city, bearing the ark of God and blowing upon trumpets. First came the warriors, a body of chosen men, not now to conquer by their own skill and prowess, but by obedience to the directions given them from God. Seven priests with trumpets followed. Then the ark of God, surrounded by a halo of divine glory, was borne by priests clad in the dress denoting their sacred office. The army of Israel followed, each tribe under its standard. Such was the procession that compassed the doomed city. No sound was heard but the tread of that mighty host and the solemn peal of the trumpets, echoing among the hills and resounding through the streets of Jericho. The circuit completed, the army returned in silence to their tents, and the ark was restored to its place in the tabernacle." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 488.1, Ellen G. White.

"For six days the host of Israel made the circuit of the city. The seventh day came, and with the first dawn of light, Joshua marshaled the armies of the Lord. Now they were directed to march seven times around Jericho, and at a mighty peal from the trumpets to shout with a loud voice, for God had given them the city." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 488.3, Ellen G. White.

"The vast army marched solemnly around the devoted walls. All was silent, save the measured tread of many feet, and the occasional sound of the trumpet, breaking the stillness of the early morning. The massive walls of solid stone seemed to defy the siege of men. The watchers on the walls looked on with rising fear, as, the first circuit ended, there followed a second, then a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth. What could be the object of these mysterious movements? What mighty event was impending? They had not long to wait. As the seventh circuit was completed, the long

procession paused, The trumpets, which for an interval had been silent, now broke forth in a blast that shook the very earth. The walls of solid stone, with their massive towers and battlements, tottered and heaved from their foundations, and with a crash fell in ruin to the earth. The inhabitants of Jericho were paralyzed with terror, and the hosts of Israel marched in and took possession of the city."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 491.1, Ellen G. White.

"The Israelites had not gained the victory by their own power; the conquest had been wholly the Lord's; and as the first fruits of the land, the city, with all that it contained, was to be devoted as a sacrifice to God. It was to be impressed upon Israel that in the conquest of Canaan they were not to fight for themselves, but simply as instruments to execute the will of God; not to seek for riches or self-exaltation, but the glory of Jehovah their King. Before the capture the command had been given, "The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein." "Keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed … and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it."- Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 491.2, Ellen G. White.

The Israelites went round the walls of Jericho once for six days, but on the seventh day, they went round it seven times. We should worship God daily as we go about our daily work. However, we should consecrate the entire twenty-four hours to God on Sabbath and have more acts of worship than we do on other regular days. That is why God urges us to rest in Him on the Sabbath and avoid all other work forms.

A common saying among Christians is, "We need to wait for the Lord." As you wait for the Lord, be actively involved in His work. Do not sit there waiting in vain. Hebrews 11:30 does not say, "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down as they sat outside and waited for it to fall." Instead, it says, "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after it was compassed about seven days." The Israelites did something. They prayed first, as we all do, and then God commanded them to compass the walls for seven days, and that is precisely what they did. Faith requires action because faith without action is dead (James 2:20).

If we look at all the miracles done by Jesus in the Bible, the people on whom the miracles were being performed were required to do something.

Let us see some examples:

Feeding of the 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish – In John 6:10, Jesus commands His disciples to make the men sit down before He performs the miracle.

The woman who touched the border of Jesus' garment – In Luke 8:43-44, The woman believed she needed to reach out to Jesus and get in contact with Him to get healed. As a result, she went ahead and touched the garment of Christ and got cured.

Healing of the man who had an infirmity for 38 years – In John 5:8, Jesus tells the man to rise, take up his bed and walk.

In John 11:39, before Jesus raised Lazarus, Jesus commanded the people there to roll away the stone.

Faith does not work in a vacuum. Faith requires our cooperation with God. God has done all the work for us. He requires us to do just a tiny portion to prove that we believe in Him. Because if we believe it, we need to live it. Not living it means we do not believe it.

The following is the faith formula, simplified:

God's part (He does the whole work) + Our Part (the lesser work) = Fulfillment of God's conditional promise in our lives.

John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son (His part which is the more significant/whole part), that whosoever believes in Him (our role which is the smaller or lesser part), shall not perish but have everlasting life (the promise)."

NB: We do not assist God in doing His work because God is not dependent on what we do since He is all-powerful. Our actions are not meant to help God. The work we do is a response that shows we truly believe God has done it all. The woman who touched the helm of Jesus' garments could not heal herself, but she touched it because she believed that Jesus could do it. Jesus told the people to roll away the stone when He was raising Lazarus. Christ did not ask them to do that because He needed their help as they could not raise the dead. He asked them to do that to see if they genuinely believed.

Matthew 9:37 (KJV) – "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." God has done all the work. He has planted and carried out the whole process of growing the crops. Our work is to harvest. In other words, our job is to go and collect. We don't expect God to go and collect it

for us. When God fed the children of Israel with manna in the wilderness, he did not bring the manna to their mouths. He made the manna fall from heaven, but they had to use their hands to collect it (Exodus 16).

God bless you as you act on His Word. Your seventh day is soon coming, and all walls barring you will surely fall.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, crush all the walls in my life that are hindering me from proceeding to the next step. Please guide me on the right actions to take. Please help me to delight in you and never get tired of your presence. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Write down your heart’s desire and the obstacles that seem to be blocking it. Pray to God to help you overcome those obstacles and any other forthcoming obstacles. Ask God to give you the desires of your heart that are in accordance with His will.

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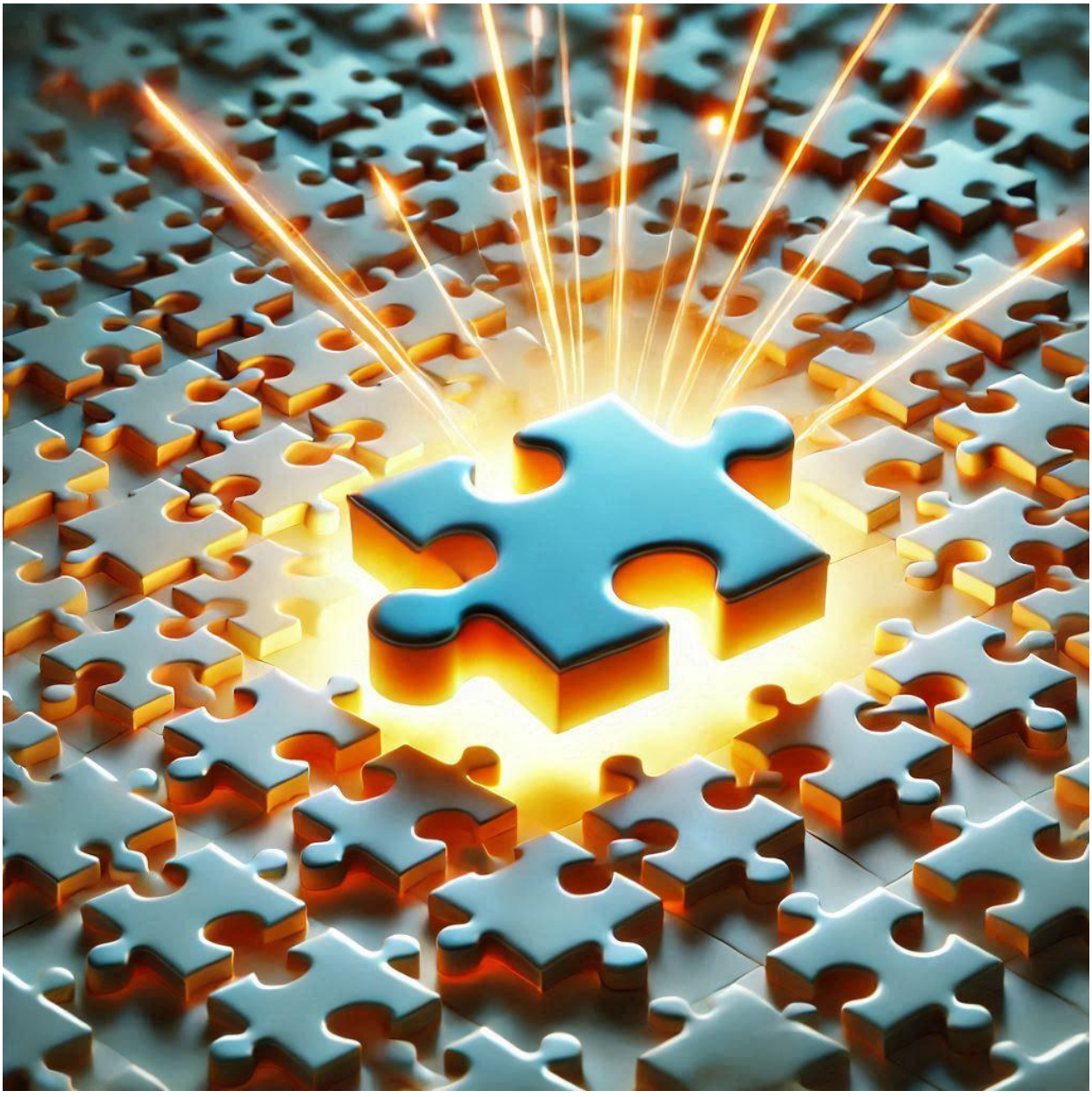
CHAPTER 50

THE POWER OF COMPLETION



On the seventh day, when the trumpets blew,

The walls of Jericho fell; God saw them through,

If they had given up midway under the sky that's blue,

No good would have happened to the marching crew.

Completing what you've started is an act of faith,

Obeying God in every step, heeding what the Lord saith,

So complete your projects, both big and small,

Glorify God in all of them, heed His divine call.

Disobedience to God and partial obedience won't suffice,

God wants total obedience, don't give Satan a chance,

God wants you to flourish, Jesus paid the heavy price,

Don't let the good that God has for you to be just a passing glance.

Incompletion is a flaw in God's perfect plan,

The walls of Jericho did not fall till they reached the seven-day span,

Procrastination and incompletion bring no fun,

Be consistent in your work, and be diligent when it's your turn.

Hebrews 11:30 (KJV) – "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Jericho's walls fell after the Israelites went around them for seven days. Let's consider the instructions given to the Israelites:

Joshua 6:3-5 (KJV) – "[3] And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. [4] And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. [5] And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."

Given these instructions, the Israelites obeyed everything God had told them, so the walls of Jericho fell flat (Joshua 6:20).

Let's ask ourselves some vital questions:

If the Israelites had gone around Jericho once and failed to go the other days, would the walls of Jericho have fallen? Would the walls fall if the Israelites had gone around Jericho for 6 days and failed to go on the seventh day?

If the Israelites went around Jericho for 6 days and on the seventh day went around it 6 times instead of 7, would the walls have fallen? If the Israelites had done everything the Lord told them to but failed to blow the trumpets and shout, would the walls of Jericho fall? The answer to all these questions is No. There is nothing like Partial obedience. Partial obedience is equal to disobedience.

By faith, the Israelites went around the walls of Jericho once for six days and seven times on the seventh day. They blew the horn and shouted, and as a result of their action, the walls of Jericho could fall. By faith, they completed everything that God had told them to finish. They did not do their duties haphazardly in pursuing the Jericho walls. They did not give up going around those walls until they saw results. They acted with faith. By faith, they trusted God's process.

Faith goes hand in hand with total obedience and completing the tasks God has commanded you to do. There is power in completion. Faith is believing in the process that God is taking you.

The Bible calls all who fail to complete what they started sluggards. Because failing to finish what you had started (except sin), is failing to fulfill God's purpose and portrays a lack of trust in God.

Let's look at some verses that talk about people who do tasks haphazardly, not completing them:

Proverbs 12:27 (KJV) – "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Many people think sluggards or lazy people are just people who fail to do anything. If you look at Proverbs 12:27, you can see that the man the Bible refers to as a sluggard goes hunting but fails to roast what he took in hunting. In other words, he fails to complete tasks.

Let's consider some other verses:

Proverbs 19:24 (KJV) – "A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."

Notice the word 'again' in the above context. It means that the lazy man brought his hands to his mouth once but out of inconsistency, he did not bring it again. Lack of consistency leads to a lack of completion of one's goal, which is the same as laziness.

Proverbs 6:6-8 (RSV) – "[6] Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. [7] Without having any chief, officer or ruler, [8] she prepares her food in summer, and gathers her sustenance in harvest." The ant does not just prepare her food in the summer; it gathers it during harvest. If the ant, as small as it is, completes what it has started, how much more are we supposed to do, us who God created in His image and likeness?

Proverbs 6:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: [11] So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Notice in Proverbs 6:10 the use of the word "a little."

A little laziness can cost one so much. A little delay or procrastination can cost someone a lifetime opportunity. There are blessings in doing every little thing God has ordered you to do. Completing what God has told you to do is highly important. If Jesus came into this world and did everything

that God had told him to but failed to die on the cross, the work of salvation would be incomplete, and hence the whole world would be doomed.

In Joshua 6:1-2 (KJV), the Bible says, "[1] Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. [2] And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor."

God had already secured Joshua and given Jericho to the hands of the Israelites. He just needed them to obey His instructions, and all that was ordained in the spiritual would be accomplished in the physical.

If the Israelites had failed to obey God, they would have made God's efforts to be in vain. This is one of the reasons why the people who have willfully and knowingly disobeyed God will be punished severely on the day of judgment because they have made vain God's efforts of the salvation work that Jesus did upon His life, death, and resurrection.

God has already made you successful in your line of work, but laziness and failing to do exactly what He has told you to do is disregarding God's efforts.

Most of us fail to complete tasks because of obstacles. In our minds, we expect everything that we have started to run smoothly from the beginning to the end. Since we are in a sinful world, that is not possible. We should not look at the obstacles; we should focus on God, who has power over all obstacles.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 (KJV) – "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The Bible tells us that someone who looks at obstacles will not do anything. "But we must meet all obstacles placed in our way, and overcome them one at a time. If we overcome the first difficulty, we shall be stronger to meet the next, and at every effort will become better able to make advancement.

By looking to Jesus, we may be overcomers. It is by fastening our eyes on the difficulties and shrinking from earnest battle for the right, that we become weak and faithless." – Messages to Young People, Page 46.1, Ellen G. White.

Do you have a project you've left pending and failed to complete? Did you start studying a particular Bible subject but were unable to complete that study? Have you chosen to obey God and

have done that but failed to follow only one of the commandments? God is calling upon you to complete your work. God is calling upon you to do everything He says precisely as He says it.

“By taking one step after another, the highest ascent may be climbed, and the summit of the mount may be reached at last. Do not become overwhelmed with the great amount of work you must do in your lifetime, for you are not required to do it all at once. Let every power of your being go to each day’s work, improve each precious opportunity, appreciate the helps that God gives you, and make advancement up the ladder of progress step by step. Remember that you are to live but one day at a time, that God has given you one day, and heavenly records will show how you have valued its privileges and opportunities. May you so improve every day given you of God, that at last you may hear the Master say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”- Messages to Young People, Page 46.2, Ellen G. White.

Genesis 2:1-3 (KJV) – “1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.”

God rested on the Sabbath after He had completed all His work. You can only truly rest on Sabbath after you have completed all you need to complete during the week. One who has procrastinated and conducted his work mediocrely cannot find peace of mind when the Sabbath arrives. God rested from His work of creation. You rest from work; you do not rest from idleness.

May God give you the consistency needed to complete what you have started.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God,

Please forgive me for the delay in tasks. Please help me to complete all the projects that I have started that are in accordance with your will. Please help me to stop procrastinating and to be excellent in everything I do. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List all your unaccomplished life goals.
2. List all your unfinished projects.
3. List all your unfinished tasks.
4. Create a realistic plan on how you will complete your various projects and tasks. You can break it down into months and weeks.
5. Evaluate yourself at the end of every week on the progress you have made.
6. Evaluate yourself at the end of every month on the progress you have made.
7. Evaluate yourself at the end of every year on the progress you have made.

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CHAPTER 51

THE FAITH OF THE HARLOT RAHAB

The faith of the foreign harlot called Rahab,

Surpassed the faith of the chosen Israel King called Ahab,

Sometimes unbelievers show strong faith than believers,

Because believers have chosen to be deceivers.

Believers are deceivers when they aim to be receivers and not givers,

Not letting blessings flow, they act like blocked and unclogged rivers,

Blocking the outlets, deprived of fresh water, their rivers are in constant pollution,

Constant pollution creates more problems with no solution.

A leader with no solution causes revolution,

Because of no constructive contribution,

Which in turn causes more and more confusion,

Like Josiah, we can make a resolution,

To turn to God and acknowledge Him as the only solution.

Hebrews 11:31 (KJV) – "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

The harlot Rahab was among the people who did not believe in God. However, she acted with the fear of God and received the spies in peace. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "Even if you are an atheist if you do things God's way you are blessed. If you are an atheist and you return a tithe, you receive the blessing of the tithe." If you are an atheist and fail to steal or practice any form of monetary corruption, you won't face the consequences that come with that sin.

If God can bless people who do a few good things, how much more will He bless you if you obey everything He says? God tends to reward you with so much for something tiny you have done. When you do something small to God, He won't reimburse your action with something small in return. God will remunerate it with something big.

Not only will He recompense it with something big, but He will multiply it greatly. Investments in stocks, land and all earthly property can depreciate or be destroyed, but investing in God will never be damaged. God wants to bless you more than you want Him to bless you. That is why in His word, He reminds you time and again to obey Him. That is why He compels you to have the spirit of giving and not receiving. Acts 20:35 (KJV) – "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"The disciples were the channel of communication between Christ and the people. This should be a great encouragement to His disciples today. Christ is the great Center, the Source of all strength. His disciples are to receive their supplies from Him. The most intelligent, the most spiritually minded, can bestow only as they receive. Of themselves they can supply nothing for the needs of the soul. We can impart only as we receive, and we can receive only as we impart. As we continue to impart, we shall continue to receive; and the more we impart, the more we shall receive." – The Signs of the Times, January 22, 1902, Ellen G. White.

1 Chronicles 29:14 (KJV) – "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

Everything we give back to God belongs to Him. God is exceedingly good that He gives you something and asks you to return a small portion of what he has given you, and in return, He blesses you with more than you had before. God does not ask for what He has not bestowed on you. Instead, He asks for what He has already given you.

God has shown patience and mercy to you, and He expects you to show the same to others. God has filled your life with joy and peace and hopes you serve other people's lives with joy and peace. God has given you knowledge and understanding of His word and expects you to transfer it to others. We are like a channel for blessings to flow; we should not block that channel. We should let the river of benefits that flow to our lives flow to other people's lives.

Rahab heard how powerful God is and what He had done to the surrounding nations, and with the fear of God, she acted accordingly. She did a simple act of hiding two spies in her house. As a result, God saved her and her family from destruction even though she was a prostitute.

Joshua 2:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. [11] And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath."

The whole nation of Jericho heard what God had done to the two kings of the Amorites, and the entire nation feared. Rahab was part of the nation of Jericho. However, the whole country perished, but Rahab and her family did not.

The difference between Rahab and the rest of Jericho was Rahab was the only one who acted by faith. Rahab was the only one who allowed the blessings that had flown to her (knowing who God is and what He can do) to flow to other people. The other people received the blessings when they heard what God had done to the surrounding nations but did not allow those blessings to flow by letting the Israelites peacefully into that land. As a result, they were destroyed.

Blessings don't have to be tangible to know you have acquired them. They can be spiritual and invisible. They can come through listening to someone else's testimony or seeing a miracle happen. They can come as a new Bible verse you hadn't known or spiritual insight from a Christian book. They can be in the form of a compliment from someone or an act of kindness. Whichever form they take, allow those blessings to flow freely.

Don't block that channel. If you stop it, you won't have room for more blessings to flow to you. American comedian and talk show host Steve Harvey wanted a new car, and every time he would tell his mother about it, his mum would tell him to get rid of his old car. Steve says he received a

new car after getting rid of his old car. He says removing the old vehicle created an empty parking space for the new car to park.

You ask God for a car and haven't exhausted your feet, or public transportation means doing God's work. You have never gone for missions, done any outreach, or visited anyone in a hospital or prison, or children's home. You never even visit your neighbors when they are bereaved or face challenges. God may ask you, "Yes, you want a car, but for what?"

You want a bigger house but have never invited anybody to your small one. You want God to give you the opportunity to travel outside the country, but you have never used the chance to visit the afflicted in neighboring counties, cities, or states.

You may be telling God, 'Give me the opportunity to visit Mauritius or Italy" God is asking you in return, "To do what?" It is God's will that you should travel to see more of His creation. It is also God's will that when you travel there, you may be a blessing, not a curse.

You want God to give you the opportunity to travel and see the historical sites written in the Bible, and you never read the Bible. How will you know them if you have never studied about them? How sure are you that you are not living in one of them? If you want new clothes in your wardrobe, remove the old ones filling space to create room for the new.

John C. Maxwell says, "No one gets rich without enriching others." You want more money but haven't exhausted the free or available resources that God has given you to further His kingdom. For example, one of my free resources is the WordPress and Tumblr platforms, which I use to write my Christian blog. Another free resource I have is people's phone numbers, WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Telegram.

Through writing and sharing on those free media platforms, the blog has been read by people in over 110 countries and all continents. It has reached almost all Islamic nations. All that has been done with no money.

I don't know which free resources are at your disposal and what gift you possess, but if dedicated to God, you can use it to the maximum and have a more significant impact than that. When God sees you have maximized fully at the level you are in, He will push you to the next level so that you can have a more significant impact.

Once you have done your part, you give God a better reason to grant your requests.

Joshua 2:12-13 (AMP) – "[12] And now, please swear [an oath] to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's household (family), and give me a pledge of truth and faithfulness, [13] and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, along with everyone who belongs to them, and let us all live."

Rahab did what was right in God's sight, and she had the right to request blessings from God (for her and her family to be spared). God saw that she had done all she could with what she had and blessed her by granting her request.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Mark that pool which receives the showers of heaven, but has no outlet. It is a blessing to no one, but in stagnant selfishness poisons the air around. Now look at the stream flowing from the mountain side, refreshing the thirsty land through which it passes. What blessing it brings! One would think that in giving so liberally, it would exhaust its resources. But not so. It is a part of God's great plan that the stream that gives shall never lack; and day by day and year by year it flows on its way, ever receiving and ever giving." The Signs of the Times, January 22, 1902, Ellen G. White.

If you want to be blessed immeasurably, then you should make it a habit to bless others immeasurably. Strive to reach a point whereby you cannot count your good deeds, and God will give you blessings you cannot measure. Once you give, you can never stop giving because you will never lack something to offer.

Sharing will not make you poor as many think, but it will allow more blessings to flow. That is why Jesus says in Matthew 5:42 (KJV) – "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Peter and John had no money, but when the lame man asked them for money, they did not turn him away. Instead, Peter told him in Acts 3:6 (KJV) – "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Their lacking material goods did not mean they had nothing to give. They had the spiritual gift of healing, and that is what they gave the lame man. The spiritual gift proved more beneficial than the material gift because it completely transformed the man's condition for the rest of his years.

This act blessed others who witnessed and heard of the story, including us, reading it today. No matter how empty their pocket is, a genuine Christian can never lack something to give.

It takes no money to preach the Word of God to someone. One needs no money to fast and pray for someone. It takes no money to give someone a word of encouragement, and it takes little to no money to share with someone a devotional article. Like Rahab, we can move by faith and do daily righteous actions.

2 Chronicles 35:20-24 (KJV) – "[20] After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. [21] But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. [22] Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. [23] And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. [24] His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah."

The way God blessed Rahab abundantly for doing one righteous act is the same way you can receive a curse for doing one sinful thing. The Bible describes Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25 (KJV) – "Now before him, there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him." It describes Josiah as a king whose life was fully surrendered to God.

2 Chronicles 35:18 (KJV) – "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

2 Chronicles 35:18 describes Josiah's Passover as the best Passover that was kept. However, 2 Chronicles 35:20-24 talks about the death of King Josiah. It says that King Josiah died by committing one sinful act of disobedience: attempting to fight the King of Egypt, who was God

sent. This one act of unrighteousness brought a great curse to Josiah and killed him despite living a Godly life all his life. One sinful act prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land, and one righteous act saved the sinner at the cross. Let us endeavor to do more righteous deeds.

You are a genuine Christian and have experienced God's blessings by returning the tithe. You have experienced His blessings by not having other gods before Him and not making carved images and worshipping them. You have experienced the blessings of not taking God's name in vain, not killing, committing adultery, stealing, lying, or coveting. You have experienced God's blessings in keeping nine commandments out of ten in Exodus 20. You are probably missing the fourth commandment, keeping the Sabbath Holy.

Missing that one commandment translates to missing out on the blessings that flow through that one commandment. You have prayed and fasted for a long time, but God has not granted your requests yet.

God might be waiting for you to keep that one commandment you are not keeping for Him to bless you fully and give you what you are asking. He may be waiting for you to keep the correct Sabbath day, which is the seventh day, not a seventh day, meaning it is only one day, and that is Saturday. God blessed Rahab through one righteous act, and He will bless you fully when you do all virtuous deeds.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me use everything you have given me for your glory. Please help me to keep all your commandments. Make my light shine and help me have a righteous influence on my family and all those who are watching me. Through me, let all people I come in contact with be led to you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Take a pen and a piece of paper and write down all blessings God has given you. This list can include all the good things about you, your skills, talents, and the area of knowledge with which you are gifted.
2. Along each item, prayerfully write how you can use it to benefit others. For example, if you have been blessed with a pleasing smile, you can use it to warm people when you greet them. If you have been blessed with a vast social media following, use it to share Godly things. If you have been blessed with the ability to tell stories excitingly, you can use that gift to narrate Bible stories. If your passion is reading books, use this passion to share whatever interesting thing or quote you have learned from that book. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God and let the blessings flow.
3. Go to Exodus 20:3-17, analyze the Ten Commandments, and look for the ones you are not keeping. Ask God to help you keep them.

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CHAPTER 52

THE FAITH OF GIDEON

Gideon, one of the greatest of Israel's military men and judges,

He faced a mighty army with only a few hundred,

He did not argue or complain or ask for more leverage,

Like Gideon, may God help me to always obey His message.

Gideon, a man of great ability whose name means warrior,

Obeying God's Word made him stronger and bolder,

He trusted in the Lord, who was his shield and holder,

Like Gideon, may God help me to overcome sin, have faith and be holier.

Gideon from the poorest family, the least in his father's home,

His faith showed that an elephant can be murdered by a little worm,

He defeated his enemies without a sword or a bomb,

Like Gideon, may God help me to be victorious and always to perform.

Of profound impact was the faith of Gideon,

A mighty man of valor showed faith with action,

His victory is historical, not turned to oblivion,

May God help me to have the faith of Gideon.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Gideon was the son to Joash the Abiezrite (Judges 6:11). According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Gideon means warrior, the name Joash means given by the Lord, and the name Abiezrite means father of help or my father is help. Gideon was a judge and a military leader who delivered Israel from the oppression of the Midianites.

An angel of God came and sat under an oak tree (known as a terebinth tree) to talk to Gideon. According to Thorn and Claw, the oak's tree sturdy trunk and sprawling branches represent strength, longevity and endurance. The acorn, the fruit of the oak tree, symbolizes potential, growth and prosperity (Thorn and Claw). Oak trees are known to withstand storms and hurricanes and live long lives.

We have derived the meanings of all these because everything mentioned in the Bible has significance. Nothing is mentioned by coincidence. Gideon's name means warrior. He probably did not know this or he might not have taken the meaning of his name seriously when he told the angel of God that he was the least in his father's house (Judges 6:15).

The angel sat under the oak tree probably to give a message of strength because the Israelites were in a state of weakness as the Midianites were oppressing them. The name Joash, which means given by the Lord meant they would get victory from God. Abiezrite, which means "my father is help," signified that they would get help from God, their father.

"Gideon was the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh. The division to which this family belonged held no leading position, but the household of Joash was distinguished for courage and integrity. Of his brave sons it is said, "Each one resembled the children of a king." All but one had fallen in the struggles against the Midianites, and he had caused his name to be feared by the invaders. To Gideon came the divine call to deliver his people. He was engaged at the time in threshing wheat.

A small quantity of grain had been concealed, and not daring to beat it out on the ordinary threshing floor, he had resorted to a spot near the winepress; for the season of ripe grapes being still far off, little notice was now taken of the vineyards. As Gideon labored in secrecy and silence, he sadly pondered upon the condition of Israel and considered how the oppressor's yoke might be broken from off his people." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 546.1, Ellen G. White.

Judges 6:12 (KJV) – "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

Judges 6:15 (KJV) – "And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

The angel of the Lord (God speaking through His angel) calls Gideon a mighty man of valour. In Judges 6:15, Gideon tells God he is the least in his father's house. God does not address you according to your present situation.

God addresses you according to the potential He sees in you because He is the one who has given you that potential. You may be the worst sinner, but God calls you, His child. You may be poor, but God calls you rich. God addresses you according to the purpose He has given you to fulfill. Abraham was 99 years old when God changed his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). At that time, he had no single child, but God called him Abraham, which means father of a multitude.

Jeremiah 1:5-7 (KJV) – "[5] Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. [6] Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. [7] But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

God told Jeremiah not to say that he was a child. In other words, He was telling Jeremiah not to speak of his weakness and inability but do what God commanded. Therefore, if God addresses us according to our potential, it is an act of faith to address ourselves the same way.

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His Word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls

upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do." – Messages to Young People, Page 309.4, Ellen G. White.

Do not give Satan power by discussing what you cannot do or voicing your challenges too much. Instead, talk about your strengths. When walking according to God's will, believe that you have achieved your goals even before you achieve them. 1 Samuel 17:36 (KJV) – "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." David believed he had defeated Goliath even before he physically defeated him.

It should be habitual for you to speak the language of success. Avoid thoughts and words of doubt. It is not arrogant to speak of success if you tie God as the enabler of your future achievements. It is arrogant when you attribute your success or something that you look forward to achieving to yourself. Talking loudly about your weaknesses and challenges does not make you humble as many people falsely think. Instead, it gives your enemies the power to exploit the loopholes in your life.

Petition your challenges to God and avoid voicing them out because there is nobody in this world that you can be 100% sure that they are your true friends. Hannah did not even tell Eli, the high priest, what was troubling her. Instead, she prayed silently to God.

Few will genuinely feel sorry for you when you tell people about your burdens. A Swahili saying says, "Mzigo wa mwenziwe ni kanda la usufi." Translated in English, it reads, "The burden of another person is a belt of feathers."

Ellen G. White discourages us from sharing our problems with human beings and encourages us to share our problems with God. The reality is many people will pretend to be sorrowful when you tell them of your problems, but deep down in their hearts; they do not care, while some are happy that you are facing those problems. Secondly, when you tell people your problems you risk being misled or misadvised.

You may be facing innumerable challenges in your life, but God tells you in Romans 8:37 that you are more than a conqueror. Believing in God gives you self-confidence, making you surmount mountains you had never imagined. You will be able to do things beyond your physical and mental abilities.

A good example is Nick Vujicic. Nick has no hands, but he has authored books. He has no legs but has toured the world, inspiring millions of people and fulfilling God's purpose. He has been able to do more than some of us who have been blessed with hands and feet.

Judges 6:13 (KJV) – "And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

You may be facing great calamity in your life, such as sickness, poverty or losing a loved one, but God assures you that He is with you. Gideon asked the angel why they were facing all that oppression if God was with them. Many of us question the authenticity of Biblical stories because we have never experienced miracles that people in the Bible encountered.

Typically, when an afflicted person hears someone preaching a message of hope, they wonder how God can be with them while they face innumerable problems. Therefore, some Christians view Bible stories as fictional stories or allegories. The Bible is accurate, and everything narrated in it happened, and more incredible things than those can happen to us if we have faith (John 14:12).

Judges 6:17-18 (KJV) – "[17] And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. [18] Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again."

Gideon could not believe that it was the angel of God talking to him. Therefore, he sought a sign. He was not used to the voice of God because the culture of idol worship surrounded him for a long time. When we are constantly surrounded by evil and when we distance ourselves from God's Word, we shall not be able to know God's voice, no matter how loud it is.

Even when God Himself appears to us, we shall doubt because we have not fostered a close relationship with Him. However, God, in His mercy through His angel, agreed to wait for Gideon because He is a God of love and is yearning to save and uplift. Later, we see Gideon testing God's promise with a fleece (Judges 6:36-40).

God is not pleased when we lack faith. However, due to His love, He is willing to go to great lengths and depths to save us. Thomas behaved like Gideon. He did not believe that Christ had

risen. Jesus was not delighted by his lack of faith. Therefore, He told him in John 20:29 (KJV) – "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." However, despite all that, He still allowed Thomas to touch His hand so that he could believe that Jesus was indeed risen.

Judges 6:25 (KJV) – "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it."

God commanded Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal and cut down the wooden image beside it. Gideon was afraid to do it in the morning because people might see him. Therefore, he did it at night. Gideon's fear did not stop him from exercising his faith and obeying God. Even though he feared the people's wrath, he still honoured God. Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal and built an altar to the Lord (Judges 6:25-32).

"Gideon's father, Joash, who shared in the apostasy of his countrymen, had erected at Ophrah, where he dwelt, a large altar to Baal, at which the people of the town worshiped. Gideon was commanded to destroy this altar and to erect an altar to Jehovah over the rock on which the offering had been consumed, and there to present a sacrifice to the Lord. The offering of sacrifice to God had been committed to the priests, and had been restricted to the altar at Shiloh; but He who had established the ritual service, and to whom all its offerings pointed, had power to change its requirements. The deliverance of Israel was to be preceded by a solemn protest against the worship of Baal. Gideon must declare war upon idolatry before going out to battle with the enemies of his people." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 547.3, Ellen G. White.

Judges 7:2 (KJV) – "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."

God wants you to seek Him with faith and put maximum effort into everything you do so you do not waste the abilities He has given you. However, God does not want you to glory in your maximum efforts and think that your efforts have made you successful. The people Gideon called to join the battle were over 30,000 in number. If they won the battle against the Midianites, they

would think that their physical strength and massive number of soldiers had made them win. They would fail to acknowledge God.

If Jesus had healed Lazarus before he died, people would think that Lazarus' illness was not severe, and the miracle would not have appeared spectacular. God was angry with David when he took a census on the Israelite's army because counting the number of soldiers showed that he depended on the soldiers more than on God (2 Samuel 24).

God expects us to rely entirely on Him despite the resources and abilities he has blessed us with. Not once should we think that we are independent. That is the whole essence of the Sabbath. The Sabbath day allows us to focus on God as the Creator and acts as a weekly reminder to acknowledge our dependence on God.

Some organizations find it hard to find the best candidates to hire to fill the available vacancies. They need to understand that the success of that organization does not lie in the number of highly skilled and experienced staff. The success of all organizations depends on God, including those whose leaders do not believe in God. This is because God is the One who has allowed everybody (including unbelievers) to succeed.

"Sometimes I think it's divine intervention when the right people show up, because as we all know, it happens that people who give great interviews sometimes aren't so great, and vice versa. In that sense, every hire is a bit of a gamble. Solid gold credentials don't always mean solid gold people, but sometimes they do. You have to give people a chance to prove themselves." – Think Like a Champion, Donald J. Trump.

John 6:66-67 (KJV) – "[66] From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. [67] Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"

After Jesus was left by many of His followers, He asked the remaining ones if they would also go away. By asking them that question, He was presenting them with a choice of following Him or not. Do not fret when you do not have friends or when people leave you because of honoring and obeying God. You do not need many people around you. You need God by your side because, with God, you are the majority.

Judges 7:2 (KJV) – "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."

You may be frustrated because you have been actively looking for connections with high-profile people in society with no success. God may have caused it to happen that way because He has designed a way to help you that is different from what you were expecting. God may do that so you do not glorify your worldly connections instead of exalting Him. God knew that if He allowed a massive number of Gideon's army to go and fight the Midianites, they would attribute the victory to themselves and say, "Mine own hand hath saved me." Therefore, God decided to reduce the number of people in the army.

You may be a student in elementary, middle, high school, or university, and you are studying so hard while neglecting prayer and Bible study. Studies have kept you so busy that you have no time for God. When evaluating yourself, you wonder why your grades are so low despite all that arduous work. Set aside time for God and see Him change your results.

Gideon agreed to reduce the number of people in the army. By faith, he followed God's instructions on reducing them. Reducing the number of military personnel to make an army win defies all logic. We need to place faith in God above logic because God is the Creator of logic. He understands logic more than we do because He has more knowledge and wisdom than us. Blessed is the man who trusts in God more than the one who trusts in men. Gideon trusted in God and reduced the number of his army men. God's power outperforms the highest possible number of human beings. One person who fully believes in God is more potent than trillions who do not.

The first test that God told Gideon to conduct in the reduction of army personnel was a test of faith. Judges 7:3 (KJV) – "Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."

God told Gideon to eliminate all those who feared because where there is fear (except the fear of God), there is no faith. We see that the majority of the people left because they lacked faith. Most people in the world lack faith even though they ascribe to religion. Very few people are courageous, and very few people have faith in the living God.

Judges 7:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. [5] So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink."

"We might say that God eliminated the fearful and those who thought first only of convenience, the easy way. "The thought is disturbing, but it may well be true, that the composition of God's army to fight Satan's hosts in any day is really little different. How many Christians are so fearful of the enemy that they are of no real use in this warfare, and how many of the remainder are so self-centered, rather than God centered, that they find little place for effective ministry." – Distressing Days of the Judges, Leon Wood.

The second test was a more severe test of faith because it tested faith in action. The first test was a test for those who profess they have faith. Therefore, Gideon told all those who feared to leave the army. Twenty-two thousand people left, and ten thousand remained. The remaining ten thousand are people who professed by word of mouth that they had faith. Did they really have faith?

The second test was essential to prove if they indeed had faith. Many people say they love Jesus. Many people say that they have love, but their actions speak hate. Many say they have faith, while their actions speak fear. Many say that they are selfless, while their actions speak selfishness. The second test was highly essential to prove these people.

The ones who took the water by their hands and lapped portrayed more selflessness than the ones who knelt to drink. The ones who knelt to drink were more inclined to satisfy their thirsts than to redeem the people. The ones who lapped showed that their minds focused more on the goal ahead than on fully satisfying their thirst. They lapped because they just needed a little water to keep them going. Out of the ten thousand remaining men, only three hundred were found to be selfless and were found to have true faith.

Therefore, out of the initial thirty-two thousand people, only three hundred showed genuine faith and selflessness, representing less than 1% of the population. In our world, people who are highly

and truly successful in life are less than 1% because they have selflessly done their best to add value to the world. Adding value to the world requires faith. It requires a lot of discipline and sacrifice. Selfish people cannot accomplish lofty heights of achievement because they do not want to give their knowledge, time, abilities, and resources.

Research shows that in most churches, only 20-30% of the congregation returns tithe. However, most churches run their operations smoothly because the tithe they have received is sufficient. It can be excellent if everybody in the congregation faithfully returned tithes and offerings. However, little is much when God is in it. By His power and multiplying ability, God makes the money the church has received from that 30% of the congregation enough.

Malachi 3:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [11] And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

In Malachi 3:10-11, God promises special blessings to those who faithfully return tithe. Those few who return tithe, God blesses them to astonishing levels in that the tithe they have returned is more than enough to cater for most people who do not tithe. Even if it is one person out of a congregation of a thousand returning tithe and offerings, God can bless that one person so much that his tithe alone would be enough to cater for the operations and sustenance of the entire church. The three hundred people alone in Gideon's army were more than enough to defeat the multitudes of Midianites, which the Bible says were as many as grasshoppers (Judges 7:12). The three hundred men were not fighting for themselves alone; they were fighting for the nation of Israel. Those men were enough to bless everyone in Israel, including those who were eliminated from the army.

Judges 7:9-11 (KJV) – "[9] And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. [10] But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: [11] And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host."

God instructed Gideon to go down to the camp of the Midianites. He made things easier for him when He told him to go with Purah his servant if he was afraid. God may give us heavy assignments, but He will always provide more manageable ways of doing them if the assignments are beyond our abilities.

Hebrews 11:6 says that it is impossible to please God without faith. Fear is the opposite of faith. God understood that Gideon was not fully mature in faith. Therefore, he may have a little fear in his heart. That is why God gave Gideon the option of tagging Purah along. With that example alone, we can see that God is not as cruel as some of us portray Him to be, and inheriting eternal life is not as challenging as we portray it to be.

God entertains no sin. However, he does not demand a person to be 100% righteous immediately after surrendering their lives to Him. He understands that your faith is not strong enough, just like He understood Gideon's. Therefore, He is willing to walk with you step by step until you reach the ultimate mark.

If Gideon went there alone, he would fear and would easily be discouraged. If he went with Purah, he would be strengthened. Fellowship strengthens believers. Fellowship is a beautiful gift in building up the faith of believers. We should not worry or despair when we look at our imperfections because God is with us. Instead, we should depend on God always to help us overcome temptations.

Some people have given up on Christianity because they feel that the requirements are too much to be fulfilled in their current state. Some have given up on their God-given purpose because they feel that the work that needs to be done is a lot and requires a lot of money. The journey towards the goal is step by step.

A certain YouTuber said before he started his YouTube channel, he was begging friends to give him 10,000 U.S. dollars because that was the money, he needed to start producing quality content. He said he got frustrated when no one gave him the 10,000 dollars. However, he just decided to start with what he had. Now, his YouTube channel is generating more money than he had envisioned. He said that you do not need to have everything to start. Start with what you have; along the way, things will keep coming.

Work on your business idea even if you do not have sufficient capital. Start with the things that do not need money, and once you are set, God will provide a way for capital to come. For example, you need no money to write a vision statement when starting. You need no money to write down your mission statement, core values and business plan. Start with what you have.

No Olympic runner jumps from the start of the race to the finish line. Each step counts throughout the whole journey. God knew that even though Gideon had agreed to follow Him, he was not fully developed in faith and may have some element of fear resident in his heart. Therefore, he provided a way of strengthening him by allowing him to tag along with Purah.

You might be saved but struggling with alcohol addiction. God will provide mechanisms for you to get out of it when you completely surrender to Him. He may do this by separating you from the friends you used to drink with. He may even give them jobs in different cities.

You may be struggling with homosexuality, masturbation, fornication, adultery, covetousness, stealing, gambling, lack of self-control and laziness among other sins. All hope is not lost. God will provide a way to escape what seems to be a bottomless pit. God is not looking for perfection. He is looking for a complete surrender to Him, and if you surrender to Him, He will work on you to make you perfect like Him.

Judges 7:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] And when Gideon came, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. [14] And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host."

God sent Gideon to spy on the Midianites so that he could hear the dream that those two companions discussed. The two companions talked about a cake of barley bread collapsing the tent of the Midianites. Logically, a loaf of bread cannot make a tent collapse. A loaf of bread is weaker than a tent. That dream meant that the Midianites would be overcome by what they considered to be a weaker nation.

"We should take it to heart; our enemies, both human and spiritual, are at their core afraid of us. "Behold the host of doubters, and heretics, and revilers, who, at the present time, have come up into the inheritance of Israel, hungry from their deserts of rationalism and atheism! They are eating

up all the corn of the land. They cast a doubt upon all the verities of our faith. But we need not fear them; for if we heard their secret counsels, we should perceive that they are afraid of us. Their loud blusterings and their constant sneers, are the index of real fear. Those who preach the cross of our Lord Jesus are the terror of modern thinkers. In their heart of hearts they dread the preaching of the old-fashioned gospel, and they hate what they dread. On their beds they dream of the coming of some evangelist into their neighborhood." – Charles Spurgeon.

"A cake of barley bread might be a worthless thing; but if God were behind it, it would upset a tent!" – Frederick Brotherton Meyer.

Judges 7:15 (KJV) – "And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."

Gideon was delighted to hear that they were going to be victorious. God sent Gideon to spy on the Midianites to boost Gideon's faith. Gideon might have doubted that the Lord was with them before he heard the two friends talking. After hearing the two friends talking, his courage and faith increased. When God gives you an assignment, and you conduct it faithfully and diligently, your faith will be amplified at the end of that assignment.

Faith in action augments faith. God has provided a conducive way for us to act in faith, directly proportional to one's current level of faith. He cannot expect one new in faith to exercise the faith of Abraham or that of Jesus. The church is less powerful because many believers act with doubt instead of acting by faith.

God gave Gideon an assignment at the level of his spiritual development. God will give you an assignment at your spiritual level. Once you accomplish it, He will uplift your spiritual state and give you a more advanced assignment. Gideon had to accomplish the assignment of going to the Midianites' camp before embarking on the actual battle so that he could have sufficient faith and confidence to fight the real battle. David believed he could kill Goliath because he had previously killed a lion and a bear (1 Samuel 17:36).

Judges 7:20 (AMPC) – "And the three companies blew the trumpets and shattered the pitchers, holding the torches in their left hands, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow [leaving no chance to use swords], and they cried, The sword for the Lord and Gideon!" Gideon and his men

never used swords to fight. They went to war with the Midianites and defeated them with trumpets, jars, and torches. Gideon captured and killed the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna (Judges 8:4-21).

Judges 8:22-23 (AMPC) – "[22] Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us—you and your son and your son's son also—for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian. [23] And Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you."

After Gideon had led a successful battle, he did not allow the glory to go to himself. Instead, he gave God the glory by refusing to rule over them and letting God rule over them. That was a tremendous act of faith. It is human nature to feel complimented and exalted when people praise us or want to promote us. This has led many to glory in their might, resulting in their downfall.

Gideon did not allow pride to dominate him. Therefore, he gave God all the glory. We need to have the faith of Gideon. Even when we feel scared, we should trust God's almighty power and believe he will get us through every challenge. We should conduct every minor assignment that God has given us faithfully because it is through these small assignments that our faith is boosted. Lastly, when God makes us succeed, we should not glorify our efforts; we should glorify God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come to You in the name of Jesus. Help me always to know Your voice. Guide me through each little task that You have given me. Please help me not to be proud when I achieve something and help me to glorify You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Write down past assignments that you have been able to conduct faithfully and how they have boosted your faith.
- Write down future assignments and pray for God to help you succeed in them
- Thank God and give glory to Him for each success that you have been able to achieve.

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CHAPTER 53

THE FAITH OF BARAK

With faith as a compass, Barak conquered the unknown,

We can do the same, if we trust in God's Word alone,

Barak's faith is a lighthouse on treacherous shores,

A shining armor that is dependent on God's divine laws.

Faith is a mountain that challenges us to climb higher,

Faith connects us to light like an electric wire,

Faith is believing that God is truth, and Satan a liar,

Barak's faith is a phoenix soaring through the air.

Faith is a rocket that launches you to a new height,

Faith is a socket that switches on the light,

Barak's legacy, eternal flames burning bright,

With God as the lead, He clarifies our sight.

Faith is a journey that takes us to new places,

Faith is the victory, making us win the races,

Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds can't be more precious,

Faith is more than all these, leading to priceless treasures.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

We are going to focus on the faith of Barak. The name Barak means lightning in Hebrew. It refers to something bright or something that glitters. Faith in God glitters. Trust in God brings brightness into dark situations. Barak was a judge and a warrior who responded to God's call to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Canaanites.

Judges 4:6-10 (AMPC) – "[6] And she sent and called Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded [you], Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun? [7] And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you at the river Kishon with his chariots and his multitude, and I will deliver him into your hand? [8] And Barak said to her, If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go. [9] And she said, I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the trip you take will not be for your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. [Fulfilled in Judg. 4:22.] [10] And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and he went up with 10,000 men at his heels, and Deborah went up with him."

"Barak knew the scattered, disheartened, and unarmed condition of the Hebrews, and the strength and skill of their enemies. Although he had been designated by the Lord Himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful. He accepted the message from Deborah as the Word of God, but he had little confidence in Israel, and feared that they would not obey his call. He refused to engage in such a doubtful undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel. Deborah consented, but assured him that because of his lack of faith, the victory gained should not bring honor to him; for Sisera would be betrayed into the hands of a woman." – Daughters of God, Page 37.4, Ellen G. White.

Barak portrayed faith when he obeyed Deborah's prophetic message and gathered 10,000 men from the tribe of Zebulun and Naphtali to fight against Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army. Barak's father's name was Abinoam which means 'father of pleasantness' or 'father of delight' in Hebrew. In Hebrew, Kedesh means to be clean (ceremonially or morally); it also means to purify, to sanctify and is also used to refer to something that is Holy, and the name Naphtali means wrestling. The name Zebulun means dwell with in Hebrew. In Greek, Zebulun means exalted. In Hebrew, the name Jabin means intelligent, and the name Canaan means to humiliate or bring down.

The tribe of Naphtali was given the following blessings: "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words (Genesis 49:21, KJV)." This blessing from Jacob implies that Naphtali and his descendants would be graceful, swift, agile, and eloquent. Drawing from this verse, some interpreters understand that Naphtali would produce scholars and poets who would teach and inspire others.

"And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord: possess thou the west and the south (Deuteronomy 33:23, KJV)." This blessing from Moses indicates that Naphtali and his tribe would enjoy God's favour and blessing and inherit a fertile and pleasant land.

The tribe of Zebulun was accorded the following blessings:

Genesis 49:13 (KJV) – "Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon."

Deuteronomy 33:18-19 (KJV) – "[18] Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. [19] They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand."

Therefore, Barak, whose name means lightning, was the son of pleasantness (because his father's name Abinoam means pleasantness) and came from a sanctified or holy place (Kedesh means to sanctify). Barak was from the tribe of wrestling (because Naphtali means wrestling). Nothing in scripture is accidental.

There is a reason the names Barak, Abinoam, Kedesh and Naphtali are mentioned. The fact that they are mentioned means that they are essential. If they were not significant, they would not have

been mentioned. For example, Lot's wife's name is not mentioned. Job's wife's name is not mentioned. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that God sent pleasant lightning from a holy place to wrestle against the intelligent enemy to humble them. God does not put men in a state of humiliation to mock them. He humbles men so that they can draw closer to Him.

Barak was afraid to go to battle against Jabin's army. Therefore, he requested Deborah to go with him. Some people can go to minister or to prophesy alone. At the same time, others need people to accompany them. Deborah agreed to go with Barak. We should always be willing to join our less spiritual friends to enable them to overcome the enemy. Barak did not know God had given him sufficient power and blessings to overcome the enemy. Many saved Christians do not know God has given them enough power to overcome temptations. Barak had never battled anyone before. Therefore, he might have feared for his lack of experience in war.

He was willing to give up at the very beginning. Deborah did not want him to give up on God's call. Therefore, she agreed to help him. We should always be ready and willing to hold hands and uplift new members in the body of Christ, walking with them before they become spiritually mature. The Devil is usually looking for such people, and he delights when he finds them in solitude, with no one to guide them, or in the wrong company.

Judges 4:14-16 (AMPC) – "[14] And Deborah said to Barak, Up! For this is the day when the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Is not the Lord gone out before you? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. [15] And the Lord confused and terrified Sisera and all his chariot drivers and all his army before Barak with the sword. And Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled on foot. [16] But Barak pursued after the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoiim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left."

"Poorly Equipped Israelites Go to Mt. Tabor—Barak now marshaled an army of ten thousand men, and marched to Mount Tabor, as the Lord had directed. Sisera immediately assembled an immense and well-equipped force, expecting to surround the Hebrews and make them an easy prey. The Israelites were but poorly prepared for an encounter, and looked with terror upon the vast armies spread out in the plain beneath them, equipped with all the implements of warfare, and provided with the dreaded chariots of iron. These were so constructed as to be terribly destructive. Large, scythe-like knives were fastened to the axles, so that the chariots, being driven through the ranks

of the enemy, would cut them down like wheat before the sickle." – The Signs of the Times, June 16, 1881, Ellen G. White.

"The Israelites had established themselves in a strong position in the mountains, to await a favorable opportunity for an attack. Encouraged by Deborah's assurance that the very day had come for signal victory, Barak led his army down into the open plain, and boldly made a charge upon the enemy. The God of battle fought for Israel, and neither skill in warfare, nor superiority of numbers and equipment, could withstand them. The hosts of Sisera were panic-stricken; in their terror they sought only how they might escape. Vast numbers were slain, and the strength of the invading army was utterly destroyed. The Israelites acted with courage and promptness; but God alone could have discomfited the enemy, and the victory could be ascribed to Him alone." – Daughters of God, Page 38.1, Ellen G. White.

Deborah encouraged Barak by assuring him that the Lord was with him. As Christians, we should not run short of words of encouragement. We should constantly reassure our brothers and sisters of God's power, lest they forget and fall astray. This reminder is seen in the Sabbath commandment.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

We are commanded to always remember the Sabbath day. One reason is that during the week, we can have numerous challenges and think that God has abandoned us, but when Saturday reaches, we are reminded of God's love since the Sabbath points us to God as the Creator. The blessed and sanctified Sabbath day is meant to strengthen our faith. Deborah's reassurance made Barak's faith in God stronger. As a result, he attacked Sisera's army, which had nine hundred iron chariots at Mount Tabor. He pursued the enemy's army and defeated them so that none was left alive.

Judges 4:17-24 (KJV) – "[17] Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. [18] And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me;

fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. [19] And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. [20] Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? That thou shalt say, No. [21] Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. [22] And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. [23] So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. [24] And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan."

Barak sang a song of praise to God with Deborah for the victory over the Canaanites (Judges 5:1-31).

"Deborah celebrated the triumph of Israel in a most sublime and impassioned song. She ascribed to God all the glory of their deliverance, and bade the people praise Him for His wonderful works. She called upon the kings and princes of surrounding nations to hear what God had wrought for Israel, and to take warning not to do them harm. She showed that honor and power belong to God, and not to men, or to their idols. She portrayed the awful exhibitions of divine power and majesty displayed at Sinai. She set before Israel their helpless and distressed condition, under the oppression of their enemies, and related in glowing language the history of their deliverance." — The Signs of the Times, June 16, 1881, Ellen G. White.

By faith, Barak obeyed God through the words of Deborah, the prophet. He did not look down on her. Instead, he asked her to help him. Some men cannot listen to a woman's advice even if the advice is Godly. As a result, they block themselves from accessing the blessings of God. We should hearken diligently to the voice of God, even if it comes from a child or someone who is not as educated as we are.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the example of Barak's faith. May our trust in You be like a guiding light, bringing brightness into our lives. Please help us to have a constant practice of encouraging others and to discern between righteous and evil advice. Grant us courage and strength to respond to Your call, even in uncertainty. As we face battles, let our faith shine, and may we find victory through trust in Your promises. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Activity

Create a list of the people who have just joined the Christian faith or your church. They can be your friends, acquaintances, or anyone. Pray for them and look for ways that you can constantly encourage them.

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CHAPTER 54

THE FAITH OF SAMSON

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In the Old Testament scrolls, a tale in the book of Judges unfolds,

Of Samson bold, and strength that holds,

A mighty hero, with a mission divine,

From birth, God commanded him to taste no wine.

From womb to world, with Godly diet,

His strength divine, you could not deny it.

Guided by God, to follow the Creator's map,

His life's a script, interesting to tap.

God's divine plan, a cosmic blend,

God's divine love, that never ends,

With lions and thousands slain,

Samson's faith in God, made him greater even in the end.

But pride, oh pride, like a sitcom plot twist,

Brought Samson low, in a fatal tryst,

In Delilah's grasp, he lost his treasure,

His strength diminished, what a painful measure.

But fear not, friends, for redemption's near,

In rubble and dust, Samson's end was clear.

With pillars crashing, he took his stand,

A hero's comeback, oh so grand.

So let's learn from Samson's show,

A tale of faith, with highs and lows.

In his story, we find our own hope,

A journey of faith, will yield good crop.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

After Abdon judged Israel for eight years, he died and was buried in Pirathon which is in the land of Ephraim (Judges 12:13-15). The Israelites did evil and God delivered them to the Philistines for forty years. A man named Manoah of Zorah from the tribe of Dan had a barren wife (Judges 13:1-2). The Bible constantly records various great people who have been born from mothers who were once barren. This shows that greatness can stem from barrenness. Fertility can arise from infertility. Possibility can come from impossibility and success can come from failure.

Great people like Isaac, Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel), Joseph, Samuel, and John the Baptist were born by once-barren mothers. Samson, the strongest person who ever lived, is no exception. According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Samson means Sunlight or "like the sun." It may not be explicitly mentioned in the Bible, but Samson's parents might have given him that name because Samson's birth was like the light that is at the end of the tunnel or the dawn that comes after the darkest hour. The day of his birth signified a bright day after years of his parents patiently hoping to have a child.

Hebrews 11:32 lists Samson as one of the heroes of faith. Therefore, we are going to focus on the faith of Samson.

The Birth of Samson

The name of Samson's father was Manoah. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Manoah means rest. Samson's mothers name is not mentioned. She is more than once referred to as Manoah's wife, which is the same as the wife of Manoah. Since Manoah's name means rest, if we consider the phrase, "the wife of Manoah" and substitute the name Manoah with rest, we shall get the phrase, "the wife of rest."

Before she gave birth to Samson when someone called her, “the wife of Manoah” (which means the wife of rest) it seemed like Mockery. It seemed ironical that she was being called, “the wife of rest” while her state of barrenness did not allow her to experience rest.

God does not look at you in reference to your current state (like most human beings do). Instead, He looks at you in reference to your future state. God did not look at dust for what it was. He looked at it for what it could be and did His work to use it to create man and breathed into it life. Everything that God created was good (Genesis 1:31) including dust.

God gives life to what was once lifeless because He is life (John 14:6). God makes bright what was once dark because He is the light (1 John 1:5). God the potter does not look at clay as it is in its current state, He looks at it as the finished product because He is a visionary God who is determined and who knows that He will succeed in everything He does. So, it is important not to look at yourself as your negative relatives, friends, and enemies do. You should look at yourself as God does.

Judges 13:2-5 (KJV) – “2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. 4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: 5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

An angel of God appeared to Manoah’s wife, giving her good news that she would not be in her state of barrenness forever. The angel of the Lord did not bring his own words from his own thinking to Manoah’s wife. The angel delivered the Word that God had sent him to Manoah’s spouse. This shows us that the Word of God is a hope-giving Word.

God may not always use angels to deliver to you His Word, He may use other means. The means that God uses the most is the Bible. In its sacred pages, we find hope. He can use people to deliver a message to you, both righteous and wicked people. Besides human beings, God uses other elements of nature to send messages to his beloved people.

Are you feeling hopeless? Seek God's Word to find hope. Are you feeling discouraged? Seek God's Word to get encouraged. Are you feeling confused? Seek God's Word to find clarity? Are you feeling sick? Seek God's Word to find healing. Are you feeling weighed down? Seek God's Word to get lifted up. Are you tied up in the middle of two conflicting decisions? Seek God's Word to know what the right decision is. Money, Power, and Fame are great, but God's Word is above all these.

Prenatal Influence and Child Guidance

God gave pellucid and unclouded instructions to Manoah's wife on how to treat the new born baby. He commanded her not to drink wine or strong drink. Various medical and scientific studies have shown that there are many harmful effects that arise from pregnant mothers consuming alcohol.

Consuming alcohol during pregnancy can have serious and potentially harmful effects on both the mother and the developing fetus. The term for this condition is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), which encompasses a range of physical, cognitive, and behavioral disabilities that may occur in the child due to prenatal alcohol exposure. The most severe form of FASD is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).

Some of these potential harmful effects are:

1. **Physical Defects:** FAS can lead to physical abnormalities in the child, such as facial deformities, growth deficiencies, and organ malformations.

2. **Cognitive Impairment:** Prenatal alcohol exposure can result in intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties, and behavioral problems in the child.
3. **Developmental Delays:** Children exposed to alcohol in utero may experience delays in speech and language development, motor skills, and social skills.
4. **Hyperactivity and Attention Issues:** Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other behavioral problems are more common in children with FASD.
5. **Organ Damage:** Alcohol can harm the developing organs of the fetus, particularly the brain, heart, and liver.
6. **Low Birth Weight:** Prenatal alcohol exposure is associated with an increased risk of low birth weight and preterm birth.

Samson was going to be a judge of the Israelites with a monumental mission ahead of him of delivering the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines. So, it was paramount for such a child to have the proper training right from the womb. Many people have sunk into the alcoholism habit because their parents cherished drinking even before they gave birth to them.

Some people use foul language and are abusive because that is the training they got from the womb till they reached their adult years. Many parents start training their children on good morals once the child is old enough to understand. They neglect their pre-birth period and their infant years. My friend Jared told me that he started talking to his children while giving them instructions right from the womb.

“The carefulness with which the mother should guard her habits of life is taught in the Scriptures. When the Lord would raise up Samson as a deliverer for Israel, “the angel of Jehovah” appeared to the mother, with special instruction concerning her habits, and also for the treatment of her child. “Beware,” he said, “and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing.” Judges 13:13, 7.” - The Ministry of Healing, Page 372.2, Ellen G. White.

“The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 372.3, Ellen G. White.

The directive to Samson’s mother to abstain from certain substances and maintain a pure and healthful lifestyle during pregnancy is portrayed not as a mere suggestion but as a command deserving of careful consideration. The broader context of this biblical passage underscores the idea that God places significant importance on the holistic well-being of individuals, beginning even before birth.

The care and reverence with which a mother conducts herself during pregnancy, as suggested in the Scriptures, extends beyond the physical realm. It encompasses the spiritual and moral dimensions, recognizing the interconnectedness of a mother's choices and the spiritual destiny of the child she carries.

In contemporary society, where scientific advancements continually shed light on the intricate nature of fetal development, the biblical wisdom remains remarkably relevant. The call to carefully guard one's habits of life during pregnancy echoes through the ages, emphasizing the enduring importance of holistic health in nurturing the next generation.

The guidance provided in the Scriptures, as echoed by Ellen G. White in "The Ministry of Healing," imparts timeless wisdom on the sacred responsibility of prenatal influence. The angel's instructions to Samson's mother underscore the interconnectedness of physical, spiritual, and moral well-being, urging mothers to approach pregnancy with the utmost care and reverence. As society advances, the biblical insights on prenatal influences continue to resonate, reminding us that the choices made during pregnancy are woven into the fabric of a child's future.

“In the words spoken to the Hebrew mother, God speaks to all mothers in every age. “Let her beware,” the angel said; “all that I commanded her let her observe.” The well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother. Her appetites and passions are to be controlled by principle. There is something for her to shun, something for her to work against, if she fulfills God's purpose for her in giving her a child. If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.” - The Ministry of Healing, Page 372.4, Ellen G. White.

“But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character.

Very explicit was the command prohibiting the use of wine by the mother. Every drop of strong drink taken by her to gratify appetite endangers the physical, mental, and moral health of her child, and is a direct sin against her Creator." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 373.1, Ellen G. White.

The angelic guidance offers a pathway to virtuous character development if the mother steadfastly adheres to right principles. The virtues of temperance, self-denial, kindness, gentleness, and unselfishness become invaluable gifts that a mother can bestow upon her child. The emphasis on these positive attributes suggests that a mother's intentional cultivation of virtuous qualities can shape the child's character in a positive direction.

"Fathers and mothers need to understand their responsibility. The world is full of snares for the feet of the young. Multitudes are attracted by a life of selfish and sensual pleasure. They cannot discern the hidden dangers or the fearful ending of the path that seems to them the way of happiness. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion, their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil." – The Ministry of Healing, Page 371.3, Ellen G. White.

The opening assertion, "Fathers and mothers need to understand their responsibility," encapsulates the crux of the message. Parenthood is not merely a biological phenomenon but a sacred duty laden with ethical and moral implications. As stewards of the next generation, parents are entrusted with the task of navigating their children through a world replete with temptations and pitfalls.

The portrayal of the world as "full of snares for the feet of the young" paints a vivid picture of the multifarious challenges confronting today's youth. The pervasive allure of selfish and sensual pleasures often blinds young minds to the hidden dangers and the detrimental outcomes of seemingly appealing paths. Ellen G. White highlights the urgency for parents to comprehend the nuanced landscape their children must navigate and recognize the imperceptible perils that lie in wait.

The reference to "the indulgence of appetite and passion" speaks to the destructive forces that can divert the energies of the youth. In a society that often glorifies instant gratification and hedonistic pursuits, the consequences of succumbing to such indulgences can be profound. The use of the

term "millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come" underscores the long-term, even eternal, repercussions of misguided choices.

The temporal and eternal dimensions of the impact are crucial elements in understanding the gravity of parental responsibility. Beyond the immediate consequences in this world, the choices made by children have enduring implications for their spiritual well-being. The call for parents to start preparation "even before the birth of the child" emphasizes the need for proactive measures in instilling values, fostering resilience, and building a foundation for moral fortitude.

“Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character. It was Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, who, strong in faith, was “not afraid of the king's commandment” (Hebrews 11:23), of whom was born Moses, the deliverer of Israel. It was Hannah, the woman of prayer and self-sacrifice and heavenly inspiration, who gave birth to Samuel, the heaven-instructed child, the incorruptible judge, the founder of Israel's sacred schools. It was Elizabeth the kinswoman and kindred spirit of Mary of Nazareth, who was the mother of the Saviour's herald.” - The Ministry of Healing, Page 372.1, Ellen G. White.

“What the parents are, that, to a great extent, the children will be. The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are, to a greater or less degree, reproduced in their children.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 371.1, Ellen G. White.

The physical conditions of parents, from genetic predispositions to health habits, form an integral part of the inheritance passed down to their children. Genetics lays the foundation for physical attributes, determining everything from hair color to susceptibility to certain health conditions. Additionally, the lifestyle choices and habits of parents, including diet and exercise, not only impact their own well-being but also set a precedent for the behavioral patterns children are likely to adopt. The adage "like father, like son" or "like mother, like daughter" underscores the observable patterns of physical resemblance and lifestyle choices that often transcend generations.

Dispositions and appetites, intricately linked to one's temperament and emotional tendencies, also play a pivotal role in shaping the atmosphere within a family. If parents exhibit patience, kindness, and empathy, these qualities are often mirrored in their children. Conversely, if negative traits such

as impatience, irritability, or selfishness prevail in parental behavior, there is a likelihood that these characteristics may find expression in the demeanor of their offspring. The home environment, therefore, becomes a crucible where the emotional and dispositional elements of parents are transmitted and absorbed by their children.

Mental and moral tendencies, perhaps the most nuanced aspects of parental influence, underscore the importance of intellectual and ethical role modeling. Parents who prioritize education, critical thinking, and moral values instill in their children a foundation for intellectual curiosity and ethical decision-making. On the other hand, if parents display indifference to learning or moral laxity, these tendencies may permeate the upbringing of their children, shaping their attitudes toward education and ethical choices.

Acknowledging the power of parental influence is a call to awareness and intentional parenting—a recognition that the seeds sown by parents bear fruits that endure across generations. In understanding the intricate interplay of genetics, environment, and upbringing, society can strive to create environments that nurture positive traits and empower individuals to break free from negative cycles. This will ensure a legacy of resilience, virtue, and well-being for generations to come.

God gave Samson's mother special instructions on how to bring up Samson. The instructions were to be guarded from the prenatal stage to his adulthood. God commanded Manoah's wife on what not to eat and drink. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV) – "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Our eating and drinking should always glorify God. Some people say that God is not narrow minded to be bothered by what people eat and drink. God wants us to be highly suitable for his service, therefore, He desires us to be in the best state of health to be effective in doing what He has commanded us to do. Some Christians say that clean and unclean meat is an Old Testament doctrine.

When God was giving the dietary laws in Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21, He was giving them to human beings to benefit them. God can't get sick but we can get sick. He knew the harmful effects that would rise from eating pork and other unclean meat. He did not give those commands (or any other commands) for the sake of mere restriction.

The Lord had a reason for giving those commands because He is a God who does everything with a reason. Do not think because you do not fully understand a commandment from God, that God gave it just for the sake of limiting you and to make Himself appear superior. God has a reason for every small thing He tells you to do. The laws of diet were to benefit man, not necessarily to live long but to live well as long as one lives.

When you want to know what God's highest ideal is for every sector of your life, use the law of first mention when studying the Bible. The law of first mention is simply going to the first place where that thing has been mentioned. For example, if you want to know whether God wants marriages to be polygamous or monogamous, do not get your conviction of subscribing into polygamy from Jacob's example or from Solomon's example.

Instead, go to the Bible where the topic of marriage is first mentioned. If you do that, you will realize that God's original plan for marriage before sin and which should be the plan for all Christians is that God created Adam and Eve. He did not create Adam with many other Eves. Likewise, He did not create Eve with many Adams. Thus, when you are studying about diet, go to where diet is first mentioned.

God's Diet Plan

Having said that in the previous section, the question is, did God have a diet plan for Adam before sin? Genesis 1:29 (KJV) – "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." God created man after He had created plants and animals. However, He did not give man permission to eat the animals. Instead He gave him plants to eat. God created animals to be friends with human beings. When talking about this, Pastor Randy Skeete often asks, "Why are you eating your friends?"

God's original diet before sin was a vegetarian diet. Killing animals started after sin when God began the sacrificial system (Genesis 3:21; Genesis 4:4). Before the flood, killing animals to offer to God as a sacrifice was allowed but eating them was not yet allowed. Flesh eating (eating of beef, chicken, fish, and all other clean meat) was allowed after the flood (Genesis 9:3).

“The diet appointed man in the beginning did not include animal food. Not till after the Flood, when every green thing on the earth had been destroyed, did man receive permission to eat flesh.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.1, Ellen G. White.

“In choosing man's food in Eden, the Lord showed what was the best diet; in the choice made for Israel He taught the same lesson. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt and undertook their training, that they might be a people for His own possession. Through them He desired to bless and teach the world. He provided them with the food best adapted for this purpose, not flesh, but manna, “the bread of heaven.” It was only because of their discontent and their murmuring for the fleshpots of Egypt that animal food was granted them, and this only for a short time. Its use brought disease and death to thousands. Yet the restriction to a nonflesh diet was never heartily accepted. It continued to be the cause of discontent and murmuring, open or secret, and it was not made permanent.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.2, Ellen G. White.

Flesh foods were probably allowed because the flood had destroyed all vegetation. Therefore, eating meat is allowed by God but it is not the most ideal and the highest dietary standard that God wants us to feed upon. This is because it was allowed by God after man sinned. God’s highest standard is the diet that was in place before sin and that is a vegetarian diet.

Pastor Randy Skeete puts it clearly by likening a flesh diet to a D in a school exam and a vegetarian diet to an A. He says that the pass mark to pass an examination (in most schools, especially university) is a D. If you get a D, you have attained the minimum pass mark. In most universities, once you get a D (an equivalent of 40%), you are allowed to graduate, and you are not required to retake a class. As genuine Christians, we should not aim for the minimum pass mark, we should aim for the highest mark which is an A. Medical and scientific research has proved that a vegan diet has more health benefits than a flesh diet.

“Upon their settlement in Canaan, the Israelites were permitted the use of animal food, but under careful restrictions which tended to lessen the evil results. The use of swine's flesh was prohibited, as also of other animals and of birds and fish whose flesh was pronounced unclean. Of the meats permitted, the eating of the fat and the blood was strictly forbidden.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 311.3, Ellen G. White.

“Only such animals could be used for food as were in good condition. No creature that was torn, that had died of itself, or from which the blood had not been carefully drained, could be used as food.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 312.1, Ellen G. White.

“By departing from the plan divinely appointed for their diet, the Israelites suffered great loss. They desired a flesh diet, and they reaped its results. They did not reach God's ideal of character or fulfill His purpose. The Lord “gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” Psalm 106:15. They valued the earthly above the spiritual, and the sacred pre-eminence which was His purpose for them they did not attain.” – The Ministry of Healing, Page 312.2, Ellen G. White.

Special Instructions

Besides diet, God gave Samson’s mother other special instructions. He commanded her not to shave Samson’s hair. Samson would be incredibly strong, and his hair would hold all his strength. He would lose his strength if he shaved his hair.

From creation till now, Samson is the only person who has been mentioned to have strength residing in his hair. Each of us has a unique trait, no matter how closely we resemble one another, either physically or character wise. Our fingerprints, genetic codes, DNA methylation patterns, retina patterns, iris patterns, brain structure and function and microbiomes are different.

Our individual experiences, talents and abilities are different. We can have two musicians singing the same genre of music, but the styles are different. Two people can study engineering but one ends up being an engineering teacher and the other ends up opening an engineering firm. Two lawyers can own a law firm specializing in family law but the cases they are going to deal with in their law firms are going to be different unless they choose to partner and do a case together. Even if they do so, how they are going to argue it out is going to be different.

As Samson had a unique feature to his advantage of having his physical strength inherent in his hair, each of us has something unique that God has placed in us. If God did not tell Samson’s mother who later told it to Samson, none of them would know. Samson and everybody else would probably marvel at how strong he was but they would not know that his hair was responsible for holding his strength.

Your Unique Value Proposition

Many people do not know their unique value proposition because they do not commune with God. God told Samson's mother that Samson's purpose was to deliver the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines. It is only God who can communicate to us our purpose in life because it is God who created us. Various people in the world do not know their life purpose because they do not spend enough time with God. Therefore, they exist like lifeless broken glasses, decorating the face of the earth but adding little to no value. God is the giver of life and everything that comes with it, including your purpose.

God had special instructions for Samson. He instructed him not to cut his hair. In the Bible, he was the only person who was instructed not to shave his hair. If God had distinct instructions for Samson, He also has personal instructions for each of us. It is through our communion with Him that we shall be able to know what those idiosyncratic requirements that God has for us are.

"To every man is given "his work" (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God." – Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

Each person has been given a specific work to do by God. The work that he/she has been given is within their capabilities. God is not unjust to require you to do what is beyond your capabilities. Not all Bible writers wrote the same amount of work. Paul wrote around thirteen or fourteen books in the New Testament while Jude wrote only one book that is twenty five verses long. They were two different people with different abilities and circumstances but they all gave a hand in doing the astounding work of writing the Bible.

God has special instructions for you. We are unable to bless others to the full extent that God desires us to bless them because we rarely seek God's instructions in everything we do. Pastor Randy Skeete said he was unsure of what car to buy as he was finding it hard to choose between two vehicles. He said that he prayed to God and God directed him on the one to choose. God has a way that He would like each of us to dress.

When shopping for clothes, we seek the advice of everyone else except God. He may want one person to wear this suit and the other person to wear the other suit. He may want one to live in a certain area while another one to live in another area. He may want you to pursue a certain career while another one who has studied the same exact course as you to pursue another career.

For example, two people who have studied a course in human resource, God may want one to use his education to serve in government while the other to be a human resource teacher. God has a specific car that he wants you to drive for a specific reason. He may advise one to go for a Toyota and advise another one to purchase a Mercedes Benz. God did not necessarily tell other children not to shave their heads but He told Samson. God has special instructions for you. Seek Him to know what those instructions are.

Samson Killing a Lion

Judges 14:6 (AMP) – "[5] Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother [to arrange the marriage], and they came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and suddenly, a young lion *came* roaring toward him. [6] The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he tore the lion apart as one tears apart a young goat, and he had nothing at all in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done."

As Samson was going to Timnah to arrange the marriage, a lion came roaring towards him to attack him. Disruption follows intention. When you have embarked on an important assignment,

especially one that is aimed at transforming your life positively, you will highly meet a hindrance. Satan uses disruptions to rob you of the rewards and awards that await you once you accomplish a certain task that God has given you.

We need to pray ceaselessly against these interruptions. Disruptions come in various forms. Some can come in the form of temptations. Others can come in the form of opposition. In whatever manner they come, always have in mind that their purpose is to delay you or stop you. The Devil does not want you to have a happy family. He does not want you to inspire others positively and he doesn't want you to make money (especially if you are a generous person). He may work through family members and friends to discourage you. He may bring extremely luring temptations your way as a trap to capture you and sink you deeply into sin.

By the time you get out of that trap, you realize that you have wasted so much time in the enemy's deadly cage and recovery from the effects of the transgressions you were engaging in seems quite challenging. Satan can bring sickness to disrupt you. He can bring danger to block you, the same way that Samson encountered a lion to befuddle him from going to Timnah.

The enemy knows that most people do not have faith and will be stopped easily by the perturbations that he throws in one's way. Samson was embarking on a Godly mission. The Spirit of God came mightily upon him to enable him to overcome that lion that attacked him. As Christians, when pursuing a Godly mission, we must have faith and shun fear. Sometimes God may block the lion from attacking us (like He did for Daniel) and other times he may allow the lion to come and attack us (like he did for Samson and David).

The average size and weight of a lion can vary, but generally, male lions are larger than females. Adult male lions typically weigh between 330 to 550 pounds (150 to 250 kilograms) and have a length of about 8 to 9 feet (2.4 to 2.7 meters), excluding the tail. Adult female lions are smaller, with a weight range of 260 to 400 pounds (120 to 180 kilograms) and a length of around 7 to 8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 meters).

A lion is often referred to as the "king of the jungle." This expression likely stems from the historical association of lions with royalty and power, as well as their position at the top of the food chain in their natural habitats. Lions are often seen as symbols of strength, courage, and majesty, leading to the popularization of the term "king of the jungle."

Lions are feared by almost all animals and they have been recorded to kill buffaloes, zebras, wildebeests, giraffes, antelopes among others. They even kill human beings. Majority of the people in the world are afraid of lions. If a lion appears where there is a large group of people, almost everybody will run for their lives. Very few people will think of fighting back. The Bible says the Spirit of God came mightily upon Samson and he killed the lion. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and caused him to do the unthinkable by faith. Samson's faith made him face his fears. Samson's faith made him to courageously confront what everyone else fears.

Samson was born with physical strength but the Bible does not attribute his conquest of the lion to his physical strength. Instead, it attributes it to the result that comes from having the Spirit of God in him. When you do not have the Spirit of God in you, you lack faith and as a result, you accomplish extraordinarily little or nothing. This is because doubt acts as a speed bump to slow you down or a hitch in the get-along to prevent you from getting along.

Faith in God diminishes all roadblocks, it fixes all puzzles, repairs all potholes, cuts off all speedbumps and simplifies all maze moments, so that you can smoothly walk, run, and fly to reach the exacting standards that God has for you.

The Spirit of God makes you aware that you are created in God's image. It amplifies what you are able to do while evil spirits amplify what you can't do. Majority of the people in the world never do wonderful things because they have not invited the Spirit of God to dwell in them. As a result, they succumb to the noise around them which is often negative and is always telling them of what they cannot do.

God has given each of us great capabilities. Few use them to glorify God and that is why few people are genuinely great. Some are not aware that they possess those capabilities. As a result, they live mediocre lives with average accomplishments. Some are aware of them but use them to propel evil. Thus, what God had given them as a blessing, ends up being a curse to other people and to themselves in return.

When Samson encountered a lion, he did not run. Genuine children of God should be fearless because God has not given us the spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Instead, God has given us the Spirit of Love (2 Timothy 1:7). True love is fearless. God has given us a sound mind. A mind that is concealed and veiled with fear is not sound. When someone's mind is decked up to the nines

with love and bedazzled with faith, the person will stand tall and confront the uncommon and unthinkable.

When Samson encountered a lion he did not look for a weapon to fight it. He did not call the wildlife service. The weapon he needed was in him. The most powerful tools of success are inside you, not outside. Some people have lost hope in life because they cannot find a job. Some have sunk into despair because their plans to travel abroad in search of greener pastures have been like hunting echoes in a soundproof room or chasing rainbows with a sieve.

The lion attacking Samson did not give Samson enough time to find a weapon or call the wildlife service. We waste so much time when we delay fighting whatever is confronting us because of being dependent on outside forces. God, with His infinite mind, did not design getting employed as the only solution to fight poverty. The methods of fighting poverty are infinite since God is infinite. God did not design visiting a hospital as the only way of getting cured of one's illness. The solutions to life's problems are infinitely found in you.

Too much dependence on outside forces and other people makes you lose confidence in the power that is within you. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:27) and instilled tremendous power in each one of us. The wealth you are looking for from outside is inside you. The happiness you are looking for is inside you. When we spend quality time on Bible study, we get to know more about God. Knowing more about God helps us to know more about ourselves because we were created in God's image (Genesis 1:27).

David was not the most enormous man in Israel but he killed the giant Goliath. Samson easily tore the lion apart like a kid. Matthew 17:20 (KJV) - "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

In the eyes of any average human being, moving a mountain is not an easy thing just like killing a lion is not a facile assignment. Faith in God makes things that seem difficult or impossible to do appear easier than nailing a high-five with a mirror or alphabetizing a single-letter word. What seemed to be rough and tough, faith in God will make its undertaking appear to be as smooth as a well-lubricated door hinge.

Acts 2:1-4 (AMP) – "[1] When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place, [2] and suddenly a sound came from heaven like a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] There appeared to them tongues resembling fire, which were being distributed [among them], and they rested on each one of them [as each person received the Holy Spirit]. [4] And they were all filled [that is, diffused throughout their being] with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (different languages), as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out [clearly and appropriately]."

The disciples had never spoken in tongues before but when the Holy Spirit came inside them, they were able to speak in tongues. Samson had never killed a lion before but when the Holy Spirit got in him, he was able to kill a lion. The Spirit of God makes you do and accomplish things that you had never done and accomplished before.

Samson never told his parents about the victory he had achieved by killing the lion. We should avoid announcing our victories, even to those closest to us. To proclaim our conquests risks the insidious vanity of believing our own prowess secured them. Worse yet, such boasts may lull us into a false sense of greatness, stifling our hunger for improvement and hindering the pursuit of loftier goals. This can lead to reduced effort and make it more difficult to attain greater success than what we previously achieved.

Sometimes, the enemy of our future success is our past success. The shadow of past success can darken the path to future triumphs. Samson's story of killing a lion is written in the Bible and has been read by innumerable people across generations. Samson did not announce himself, but God announced him better than he could have announced himself. He, humble in his deeds, found his acclaim not in self-proclamation but in Divine recognition. Let God announce you.

Judges 14:7-9 (AMP) – "[7] So he went down and talked with the woman; and she looked pleasing to Samson. [8] When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. [9] So he scraped the honey out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave them *some,* and they ate it; but he did not tell them he had taken the honey from the body of the lion."

In the very body of the lion that lunged at Samson, there lay honey. Yet, in the heat of that fierce encounter, Samson's gaze did not fall upon sweetness, but upon a formidable foe. Often, we find ourselves similarly blinded, unable to perceive the rewards that lie just beyond the hurdles we face. Like the honey concealed within the lion's maw, unseen blessings await us amidst our trials.

It is when we lack the fullness of God's spirit within us that we perceive only barriers, unable to discern the boundless possibilities that lie ahead. Instead of seeing the potential for miracles, we fixate on the apparent impossibilities, allowing fear to cloud our vision and breed doubt in our hearts. Myron Golden says that nothing in this universe is one-sided. No coin is one sided. No paper is one-sided. Everything has two sides. We focus so much on the negative side that we fail to focus on the positive side.

But faith, ah, faith! It is faith that empowers us to transcend the limitations of our circumstances, to rise above our fears, and to act with unwavering courage. For the children of God, success is not a distant dream but a birthright, a testament to the steadfastness of their faith. Therefore, what may intimidate the world should hold no sway over those who walk in the light of God's truth. Faith in God makes us rise above, act courageously, and reap the rewards of faith. God’s children are meant to be more successful than the children of the world because they have faith in God.

Indeed, every problem carries within it the seed of its own solution. Let us train our eyes to look beyond the present challenges, fixing our gaze instead upon the horizon of possibility. For in that space lies the promise of divine provision, the assurance that with God, all things are not only possible but achievable.

Samson's Riddle

Judges 14:12-19 (AMP) – "[12] Then Samson said to them, "Let me now ask you a riddle; if you can tell me what it is within the seven days of the feast, and solve it, then I will give you thirty linen tunics (undergarments) and thirty changes of [outer] clothing. [13] But if you are unable to tell me [the answer], then you shall give me thirty linen tunics (undergarments) and thirty changes of [outer] clothing." And they said to him, "Ask your riddle, so that we may hear it." [14] So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." And they could not solve the riddle in three days. [15] Then on the fourth day they said to Samson's wife,

"Persuade your husband to tell us [through you] the [answer to the] riddle, or we will burn you and your father's household with fire. Have you invited us to make us poor? Is this not *true*?" [16] So Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, you do not love me; you have asked my countrymen a riddle, and have not told [the answer] to me." And he said to her, "Listen, I have not told my father or my mother [either], so [why] should I tell you?" [17] However Samson's wife wept before him seven days while their [wedding] feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. Then she told the [answer to the] riddle to her countrymen. [18] So the men of the city said to Samson on the seventh day before sundown, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle." [19] Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their gear, and gave changes *of clothes* to those who had explained the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house."

The Philistines had used deceptive means to solve that riddle. Cleverly, they approached Samson's wife and extorted her into helping them get the answer to that riddle. This scenario is similar to the serpent using Eve to get to Adam. Satan often uses women to get to men and he is phenomenally successful when he uses those women who are not strongly rooted in Christ.

For example, many teenage boys have gotten into drugs while attempting to impress a girl. Many men have made poor financial decisions and gotten into debt because of trying to get the attention of a woman. I have heard stories in schools where people squandered their entire school fees when trying to get the love of a lady. Most men will agree that it is easy to say no to a fellow man but it is not easy to say no to a woman, especially an attractive and rich one.

Women's Role in Strengthening or Weakening Leadership

Judges 16:16-17 (AMP) - "[16] When she pressured him day after day with her words and pleaded with him, he was annoyed to death. [17] Then [finally] he told her everything that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never been used on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any [other] man."

Sometimes, men will easily agree to their wife's wrong advice even though they know it is wrong because they want to end the debate and the nagging.

"Had Potiphar believed his wife's charge against Joseph, the young Hebrew would have lost his life; but the modesty and uprightness that had uniformly characterized his conduct were proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master's house, he was abandoned to disgrace and bondage." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 218.1, Ellen G. White.

Potiphar kept Joseph in prison, not because he fully believed that Joseph committed that crime but to save the reputation of his house and probably to ensure that his wife does not keep on nagging him concerning that matter. If he had failed to take action on that matter, his wife would have never given him peace.

When a lady is Godly, she can have tremendous influence in society. She can give righteous recommendations to her husband to help improve his leadership style at home and outside the home. World-renowned neurosurgeon Ben Carson had his father absent but his mother was present in his life. His mother would ask for wisdom from God on how to raise Ben Carson and his brother. She did not feel inadequate because of her singlehood. Instead, she humbly submitted herself to God and allowed the Lord to be her guide.

A prayerful woman in a homestead is a phenomenal resource. If her Godly husband is the president, the leader of an organization, a church minister, or any other jurisdiction, that leadership will improve people's lives immensely.

God is not Mocked

Galatians 6:7 (AMP) - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked [He will not allow Himself to be ridiculed, nor treated with contempt nor allow His precepts to be scornfully set aside]; for whatever a man sows, this and this only is what he will reap."

The Philistines attempted to mock God by mocking a person of God. We can lie to everybody else but we cannot lie to God. God in his omniscience knows not only what we are thinking but also what we are about to think. Sometimes we tend to take advantage of the weak (the weak meaning physically, mentally, emotionally, socially etc.).

If God were not in control, the abuse to the less strong in society would be prodigious. In school, one can be bullied because they are small in size. In various parts of the world, someone can be discriminated against and treated harshly because their ethnic background is among the minority and thus they are perceived as weak. Robbers aim at those who are physically weak. For example, they may approach those that are unarmed or those whom they have outnumbered or have defeated in physical strength. Rape and Gender Based Violence is perpetuated by the stronger party.

Con artistes aim at those who are less knowledgeable. Some people are fond of taking advantage of a person when they are at their most vulnerable emotional state (maybe that person has lost a close family member). When someone is heartbroken, especially a lady, some men may pretend to come in handy by giving her comfort but deep inside they are harboring the worst of intentions. Some people pretend to be genuine devoted Christians to gain the trust of others. This is because they know that the evil things they are doing are so hidden and no one will ever find out (these are different from those who are struggling with sin and are trying their best to get out of it).

God sorrowfully watches all this happening. We might not know but many times He prevents the worst from happening to us. Sometimes, He allows the dreadful things to happen to the feeble in society. When the perpetrators of evil see that they have succeeded in evil, they rejoice and probably sit somewhere with friends to boast on their intelligence. They are deceiving themselves because God is not mocked. The counterfeit seeds that they had sown will surely grow into counterfeit plants and they will undoubtedly reap a counterfeit harvest.

Psalm 1:4 (KJV) - "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Chaff refers to the husks or outer casings of grains like wheat or barley. When these grains are harvested, the chaff is separated from the edible part of the grain, which is the kernel. Chaff is lighter and less valuable than the grain itself. Metaphorically, chaff is used in Psalm 1:4 to symbolize that which is worthless or without substance, contrasting with the valuable and substantial aspects represented by the grain. The ungodly are likened to chaff, suggesting that they lack substance or value and will be blown away like chaff by the wind.

The ungodly will be easily blown away because they have not developed sufficient roots to hold the magnanimous temporary success that they have gained. One can get rich quick through deceitful and wicked ways but the riches they have gained will act like a curse instead of being a

blessing. The Philistines brought a curse upon themselves when they attempted to deceive Samson. Their deception aimed to gain the thirty linen tunics and thirty changes of clothing that Samson had promised.

When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, the strongest man of all times went to Ashkelon and killed thirty Philistines and took their gear and gave it to those who had solved the riddle. Therefore, their deception seemed to have brought a profit but it indeed brought a loss.

The Blessing of the Lord Makes Rich

Proverbs 10:22 (KJV) - "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

Even though the Philistines got the awards of solving the riddle, they were sorrowful because some of their people had been murdered. Some of the people slain by Samson might have been their close relatives whom they had planned to enjoy their success with. Because God is not mocked,

he had to shutter their plans but because He is also a God of mercy, He allowed them to have those garments. The pleasures of sin work that way.

Sometimes, people may get involved in an illegal business to get money to enjoy and party with their friends. God allows them to get that money but immediately moves their friends to a faraway country or city, leaving the evildoers disappointed. Harvests gotten fraudulently are always accompanied by sorrow because the seeds sown are not authentic seeds.

People who have joined evil cultic sects to get rich or famous, may get the money and fame that they are looking for but it comes with a price which is often very hefty. Sometimes, they may be required to sacrifice their body parts. Sometimes they may be asked to sacrifice their close family members whom they love the most. Therefore, they cannot fully enjoy the splendor that they have gotten from the Devil. Their aim of getting money was to enjoy but the means that they have used to get that money cannot allow them to enjoy that wealth. One can be in a grand fancy mansion, driving the latest cars but their minds are not at rest.

My friend told me before he encountered Christ, he used to make a lot of money but he could not get sleep especially at midnight to 2 a.m. He said that during the day he could not get time to think because he was busy looking for money. At midnight when he was in bed is when he would get the chance to think straight and the dubious means he had used to get wealth could not allow him peace. ‘Gifts’ from the Devil always come with sorrow because Satan is the expert perpetrator and initiator of sorrow. Satan does not come unless he can steal something (John 10:10). One of the things he loves stealing is joy and peace.

God’s blessings come with joy. In other words, God can make you rich in all facets of your life and happy at the same time. God delights to witness a scene where you are fully enjoying the blessings that He has accorded you. If you have gained riches the Godly way, you will have no guilt and no shame. Nothing will hold you back from enjoying the goodness of God. The blessing of God makes one rich in every good thing.

Samson Kills One Thousand Men

Judges 15:14-17 (AMP) – "[14] When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and the ropes on his arms were like flax (linen) that had been burned, and his bonds dropped off his hands. [15] He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out his hand and took it and killed a thousand men with it. [16] Then Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have struck down a thousand men." [17] When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi (hill of the jawbone)."

The Philistines had bound Samson in ropes because he caused damage to their fields by tying three hundred foxes and putting torches between each pair of tails. He then set the torches ablaze and let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines. Thus, the heap of sheaves, the standing grain, the vineyards, and olive groves were burned (Judges 15:4-5). Samson had done that because the father of the Philistine girl he wanted to marry had given her to his companion (Judges 15:1-3).

While controlling a riot, armed and trained policemen find it difficult to handle the rioting crowd. It will take a lot to control a group of one hundred rebellious courageous men. When God's spirit came upon Samson it made him break the ropes that were binding him. The Bible says that the ropes on his arms were like flax that had been burned. In other words, it was as smooth as navigating life's challenges with the guidance of Scripture. It was as effortless as winning a game against yourself or blowing dandelion seeds into the wind. All who are tied with the seeming unbreakable chains of sin will have those chains easily broken free when they accept Jesus by faith and fully submit to Him. What was once a struggle will be a juggle or snuggle.

Killing one thousand people with modern military equipment might be quite easy. This is because advanced army machinery are tailored to defeat huge masses of people within a flash of a second. If one uses a nuclear bomb, it will take only a few minutes to clear an exceptionally large population.

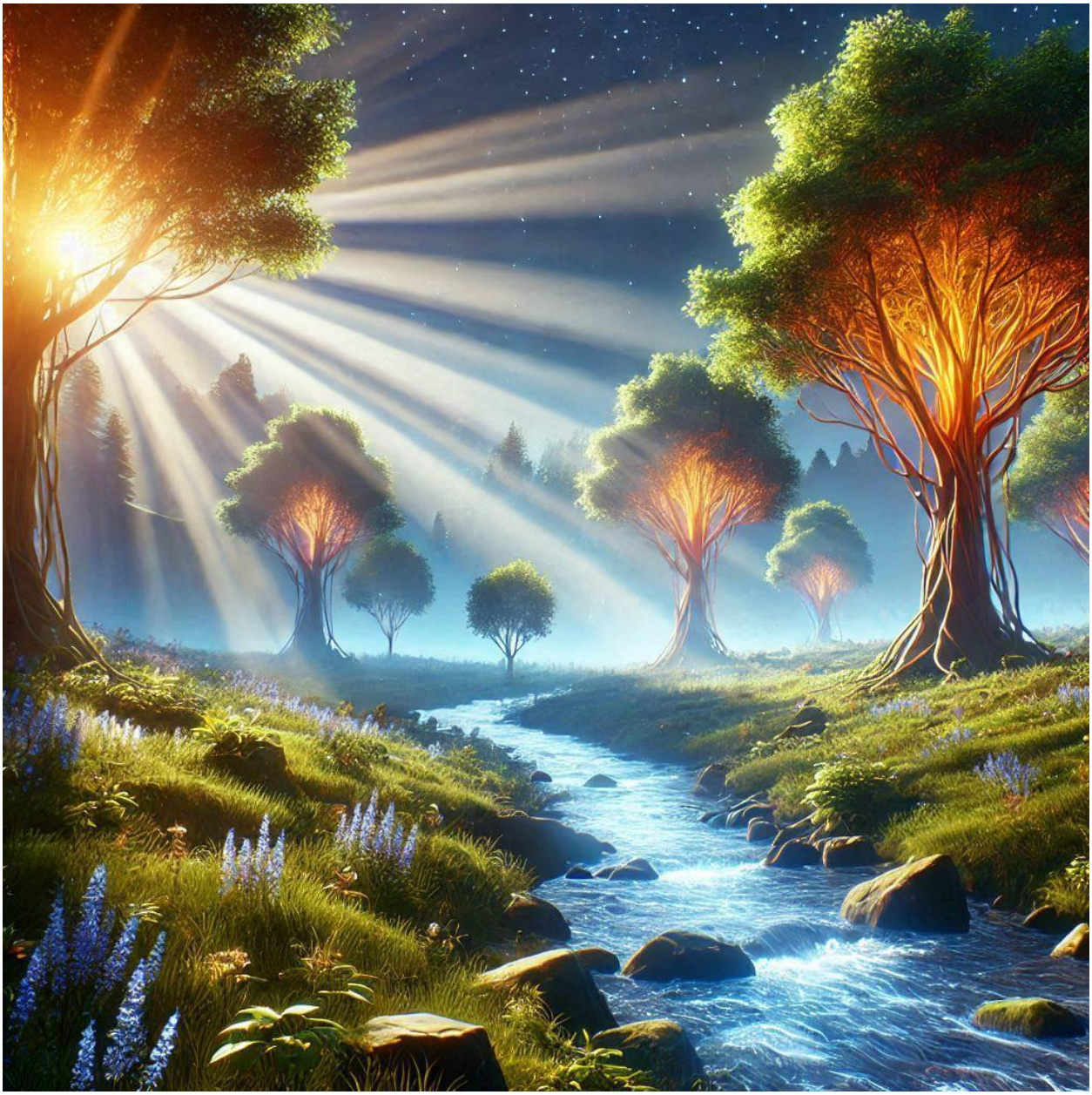
The Tsar Bomba (developed by the Soviet Union) is recorded as the most powerful nuclear bomb that has ever been created and detonated. It was 3,300 times more powerful than the Hiroshima Bomb as it had fifty megatons yield. The shockwave circled the earth three times. Windows shuttered in buildings as far as 900 km away. The mushroom cloud reached a height of 60 km (37

miles) penetrating the stratosphere. Therefore, to us who are living in modern times it is not a novelty when we hear that one thousand people of the opposing armies have been killed.

Let us use our imagination and picture Samson's story. Samson was not living in modern times like us with the most modern military technology. In those days, soldiers used to use chariots with horses, swords, spears, arrows, and shields. Samson had none of them. When a soldier goes to a battle without their fighting tools, it is obvious that they are going to lose. Samson would have lost as they had successfully tied him up, but God's spirit can never lose.

When the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, he spotted a fresh jawbone of a donkey and used it to kill one thousand Philistine men. When the Lord's Spirit comes upon you, you will be able to see things that you had never seen. Opportunities in disguise that you used to bypass daily will be vividly revealed to you. What is in your environment and you previously thought was not beneficial, you will begin to see its lofty value.

The Best Environment



God has placed us all in the best environment. Before, I knew the value of an Aloe Vera plant, I used to see it growing in bushes and I always thought it was a useless plant. Many farmers in Kisii County, Kenya might see plants like avocadoes, pineapples, sweet potatoes, and sugarcane as not useful because those plants are in abundance in their environment. Someone who has been given an export order to export those crops and is experiencing difficulty to get them because he comes from a distant land understands the true value of those crops.

People from Machakos County, Kenya may not see mangoes, oranges, and watermelons as valuable to them because they are plenty in their area. Some of them might be crying for the government to help them out of poverty but what they have in their environment is enough to get them out of poverty.

Many people from third world countries do their best to go abroad in search for 'greener' pastures. They believe that where they are, there are no opportunities and first-world countries have all the opportunities. Unfortunately, some get defrauded in their quest and are left feeling disappointed and hopeless.

Genesis 1:31 (KJV) – "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." After creating the universe, God evaluated His creation and saw that everything He had created was incredibly good. Everywhere that God created in this world is good. The notion that some places are more privileged than others is a false one. Sin tainted God's creation but it did not taint it completely. However, there are still some good aspects that can be picked from God's creation that can be utilized for our highest benefits.

Some of the poorest countries in the world are countries with the richest resources and the most energetic workforce. A developed nation is not developed because it is placed in a better environment than the one that is developing or underdeveloped. A highly priced neighborhood is not highly priced because the land that hosts it is the most fertile land. Beverly Hills, 90210 in California is not one of the most expensive zip codes in the world because it has the most amount of gold and diamonds. What makes it expensive is the people, not really the land.

What makes a nation highly developed is the people in it and not necessarily the physical land. This is because life is spiritual and human beings are spiritual beings. The law of reaping what one sows, applies greatly to human beings. When a national leader sows the seeds of corruption and bad governance, do not expect those under his rule to reap a prosperous nation.

The one thousand men killed by Samson, did not expect Samson to kill them because he was carrying no specialized ammunition. When they saw him, they saw one man whom they can easily defeat. The battle was a fight between Samson and the majority. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "With God you are the majority."

When the Spirit of God came upon Samson, He revealed to him that he can use the jawbone of a donkey to fight the one thousand men. The jawbone of a donkey was not a recognized military weapon. The sling and stone that David had were not the best military tools. God uses things that are lowly regarded to make one highly regarded. God uses things that are considered useless to do a work that is ultimately useful. The jawbone of a donkey was a weapon in disguise. When God is with you, your enemy cannot predict you because God will disguise your moves.

Remember Me

Judges 16:28 (KJV) - "And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

Samson asked God to remember him. Against God's will, he had unequally yoked himself with an unbelieving woman from the enemy's side whose name was Delilah. He was probably attracted to her because of her physical beauty. Samson's purpose was to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines. The Bible says that when a man and a woman get married, they become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

When Samson married Delilah, they became one. In other words, Samson became one with the enemy. He might not have known but being one with the enemy (Delilah) meant that he was against his own people. This meant that he was against himself. How can one fight himself? People fight themselves by disobeying God. Satan delights to see men and women being enemies of themselves. He wants us to self-destruct.

Swiftly, Delilah aided in deviating Samson from his purpose. Marrying an unbeliever will do great damage to your spiritual life. When you are with him or her you may feel shy to conduct your normal spiritual practices such as prayer and Bible study because you are afraid of how they might perceive you. When it is time to go to church, they may bring up an idea of going somewhere else. If you are a lady and you are married to an unbelieving husband, they may require you to cook or work on Sabbath. A point is reached when you realize that you have dived deep into sin ever since you met with that person. Therefore, avoid such situations. However, when you have already

entered such a marriage, the only thing you can do is to pray for your spouse and obey God's Word no matter the consequences.

Not giving up, Delilah kept on asking Samson the secret to his massive strength. For a while, Samson held on to that secret. It did not take long before he disclosed information and told his wife the secret to his strength was in his hair (Judges 16:17). The fact that you have been able to evade temptation once, does not mean that you are strong against all possible temptations.

1 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV) – "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." When you successfully overcome a temptation, thank God for giving you the strength to overcome it and pray to Him to help you overcome others in future. Satan never gives up on you. Therefore, do not give up on the fight against evil.

If Samson had married a fellow Israelite it would not have been a problem to tell her his secret. This is because they would have joined together in his God-given mission of delivering the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines. He contradicted himself when he married a lady from the enemy's side in that they could not be one since Delilah could not fight against her own people. Her aim was to get Samson to fight against his own people. Some selfish wives hate it when their husbands help their relatives, especially financially. She does everything possible to create enmity between her husband and her husband's relatives. If you have those habits, ask yourself if you would enjoy seeing your son with such a wife.

Samson fighting against his own people can also be likened to Christians who fight against God's will. A certain child who was about seven or eight years old missed attending church one Sabbath. I met her the following Saturday and asked her where she was the previous Saturday. She told me she had attended a family function. I told her that she needs to keep the Sabbath holy and come to church on Sabbath and avoid other activities. She told me she told her mother that but her mother told her to shut up. Her mother is a church member.

Most of the opposition I have faced when writing Christian devotional articles and when serving God is not from unbelievers, it is from regular church members, some in leadership positions. Opposition of my blog led to me being banned from WhatsApp three times. My friend told me that when he did a deep study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and the second coming of Jesus Christ, he thought that people would be extremely excited as he was to listen to that message.

He started sharing that message with people. He told me that it did not take long before he started realizing that people in church had stopped talking to him and greeting him.

Such opposition should not make us give up on God. Opposition while doing God's work is a blessing in disguise, especially if you overcome it. Samson fought against himself because he was linked with the forces of the evil one. Christians who fight against themselves do so because they are amalgamated to some degree with evil. They may not have married unbelievers like Samson but they have something in their life that is tying them closely to vice and immorality.

Some people have embraced evil ideologies and theories. Some have been tightly connected to unproductive and negative influencing friendships and partnerships. Some are holding on to satanic cultural practices. Some have held on to lies that look like truth. For example, the lie that is hugely promulgated is that for one to make more money, they need to spend more time on their job and less time on other important things such as God and family. As a result, they leave no time for God and their families.

After Samson's hair was shaved and his eyes were blinded, he realized that he was weakened. He probably realized that he had helped the enemy to weaken him. He knew that as much as his physical strength was in his hair, the source of his strength was not his hair but it was God. Therefore, he cried to God, asking the Lord to remember Him and strengthen Him. If you have fallen off the track, God is willing to put you back on track. He is willing to strengthen and input His infinite strength to those who have acknowledged their weakness.

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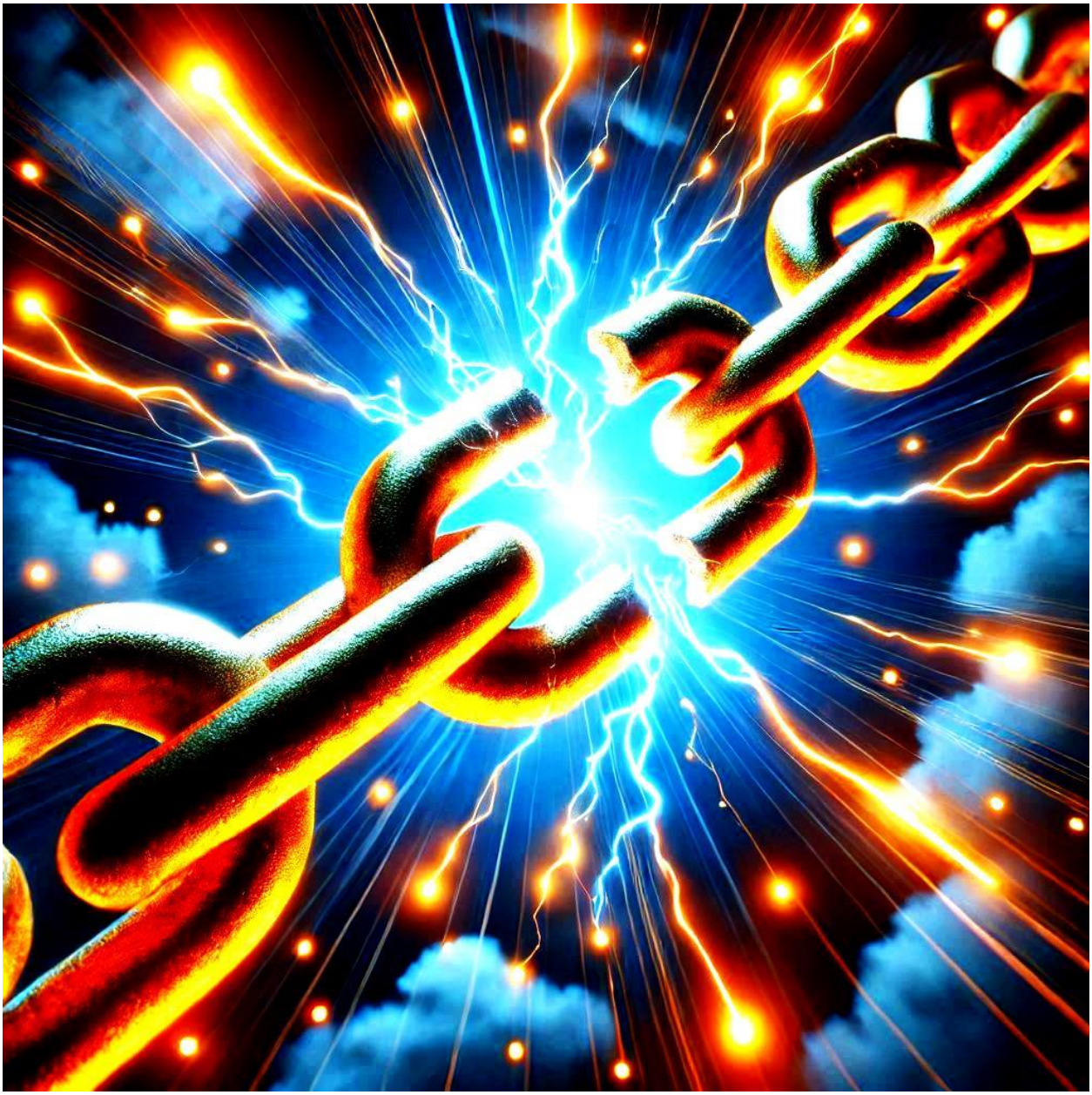
Stronger than Before



Judges 16:29-30 (KJV) - "[29] And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. [30] And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

The thief at the cross lived a life consumed by wickedness. His iniquity overflowed, yet when he humbly acknowledged Jesus as his savior and earnestly sought salvation, Jesus extended His grace and saved him. Instantly, upon surrendering his heart to Christ, the Savior forgave his sins and granted him the promise of eternal life (Luke 23:43). Consequently, his future is destined to shine brighter than his past. Remember, it is never too late to turn to Christ and transform your life.

If you find yourself weighed down by remorse or imprisoned by past mistakes, know that you are not alone. Jesus stands by, offering liberation and absolution to all who seek it. Today can mark the commencement of a fresh chapter—a tale of hope, redemption, and a future teeming with boundless possibilities.

Samson acknowledged his weakness and asked God to strengthen him. He remembered how he was once a strong man and the conquests that the Spirit of God had delivered to him. When he prayed that prayer, God boosted his strength in that he defeated/killed more people at his death than the ones he defeated in his life. The restoration that Christ wants to give us will make us better and greater than we were before. Ellen G. White writes that the new Eden will be more beautiful than the previous one (the one that was there before man sinned).

The lost son’s father had probably never made a party for his son when he was with him at home. However, when he came back home, the father received him joyfully and made a banquet for him (Luke 15:17-24). When we confess and repent our sins and with an honest heart approach God’s throne, God blesses us more than he had blessed us before.

Samson ended his story stronger than before. At that time, he was shaven and blind. He did not have his hair which stored his strength and he did not have his eyes which enabled him to see. The victory he had gained when he had his eyes and hair was less than that which he gained when he had lost them.

Many of us have all body parts functioning and God has bestowed upon us great abilities but we do not reach the pinnacle of greatness that God has ordained for us. This is because we do not acknowledge our dependence on God. Nick Vujicic has no hands and feet but through God he has been able to accomplish more than many of us with fully functioning body parts. Ellen G. White had very limited education but she has accomplished what many professors have not.

If we acknowledge our weakness and go back to God, seeking Him for strength, God is going to make us stronger than before.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we reflect on the faith of Samson and the lessons woven throughout his life, we come before You with hearts open to receive Your wisdom and guidance. Teach us, Lord, to embrace the unique calling You have placed upon our lives, just as You did with Samson. May we learn from his triumphs and his failures, recognizing the importance of obedience to Your will and the power of Your blessing.

Grant us, O Lord, the strength to overcome the lions in our path, the wisdom to solve the riddles of life, and the courage to face our adversaries with unwavering faith. May we never forget that You are not to be mocked, and that Your blessings are the source of true wealth and abundance.

Help us, Father, to create environments that nurture our spiritual growth and development, surrounding ourselves with those who uplift and encourage us in our journey of faith. And in times of trial, may we echo Samson's plea, "Remember me," knowing that You are always near, ready to hear our prayers and answer according to Your will.

Finally, Lord, empower us to emerge from every challenge stronger than before, filled with Your Holy Spirit and equipped to fulfill the purpose for which You have created us. May our lives be a testament to Your faithfulness and grace, shining brightly for all to see. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Activity

- Reflect on the story of Samson and identify one area of your life where you feel called to exercise greater faith and obedience to God's will. Write down specific actions you can

take to align yourself more closely with His plan for you, considering the lessons learned from Samson's life.

- Next, take time to evaluate the environments you frequent—the people you surround yourself with, the media you consume, and the activities you engage in. Are these environments conducive to your spiritual growth, or do they hinder your relationship with God? Make intentional choices to cultivate a nurturing environment that supports your faith journey.
- Lastly, commit to regular prayer and meditation on God's Word, seeking His guidance and strength in all that you do. Remember Samson's final prayer to God, and echo his plea in your own life, trusting that God will remember and respond to you.

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CHAPTER 55

THE FAITH OF JEPHTHAH

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Faith is like an arrow that never misses a target,

Faith builds strong towers from a tiny nugget,

Jephthah won the war with faith as his budget,

Trust God always; with Him, we are guarded.

Faith is like a helmet protecting from damage,

Faith brings back what was in sabotage,

Faith is forgiving, unloading all baggage,

Jephthah forgave and rose above average.

Faith is like a warrior leading to victory,

Faith is like a pen rewriting history,

By faith, Jephthah wrote an incredible story,

Faith conquers and solves all mystery.

Faith speaks loudly with no physical voice,

To live by faith is the most blessed choice,

Faith moves mountains without much noise,

Trust in God deploys while doubting His Word destroys.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

"A deliverer was raised up in the person of Jephthah, a Gileadite, who made war upon the Ammonites and effectually destroyed their power. For eighteen years at this time Israel had suffered under the oppression of her foes, yet again the lesson taught by suffering was forgotten." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 558.3, Ellen G. White.

Let us look at the life of Jephthah:

Judges 11:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. [2] And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. [3] Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him."

According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Jephthah means 'he opens,' and Gilead refers to a rocky region. The Bible describes Jephthah as a mighty man of valor. However, it provides a contrast by mentioning that he was the son of a harlot. The Bible starts by describing his capacity as an individual before telling us his background.

The Word of God begins by telling us Jepthah's strength before telling us his perceived weakness. God considers your strength first before your weakness. Jepthah's strength was his inner ability; his mother, being a harlot, was an outside negative force. Whatever God instills in you is more robust than outside hostile forces.

Jepthah's mother was a harlot, but the Bible describes Jepthah as a mighty man. His brothers abandoned him because his mother was a harlot. Your family background can affect you, but you should not allow it to define your destiny. Jephthah's brothers chased him out. Despite his strength, he did not argue or fight with his brothers when they decided to throw him out. Instead, he

peacefully allowed them their way and dwelled in Tob. He went from the land of Gilead, which means a rocky region, to the land of Tob, which means good, beautiful, and bountiful. In other words, he went to a better environment than the one he was previously in.

We lose a lot when we fight to stick around in places we are not needed. Many people stay in abusive friendships and relationships because they think those relationships or friendships are the best they can ever get. Some fight to inherit property because they cannot envision themselves acquiring better property than that. There is light at the end of the tunnel only if you get out of that tunnel.

Do not miss better opportunities and blessings because of tightly holding on to the obstacles. Exercise faith like Jephthah by not fighting back against those who are fighting you. Have faith and go to where God is leading you. If God reveals the Sabbath truth and leads you to observe the Sabbath, follow His lead. There are blessings when you do that. Refusing or delaying to follow God blocks you from accessing blessings. God might have hidden your breakthrough where you are reluctant to go.

Judges 11:4-11 (NKJV) – "[4] It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. [5] And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. [6] Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon." [7] So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?" [8] And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." [9] So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the Lord delivers them to me, shall I be your head?" [10] And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The Lord will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words." [11] Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord in Mizpah."

The people of Gilead returned to Jephthah because they needed help fighting the Ammonites. It should not be your intention, but if you stick to God and act righteously, people who once treated

you poorly will return to you seeking help. Jephthah was not expecting this. Humbling themselves and returning to Jephthah showed that no man in their midst could fight the people of Ammon.

A time may come when your enemies will need something that can only be done by you. This shows that even though they mistreated Jephthah, they strongly believed in his ability. Not everybody who mistreats you underrates you, as you may think. Some of them are intimidated by you, while others want to be like you.

Jephthah reminded them of what they did to him. However, he acted with faith and forgave them, agreed to help them, and negotiated with them. The price he asked for winning the war was for them to make him their leader. Asking for a price for a skill or a talent you possess is okay as long as you end up fulfilling your end of the bargain. Jephthah asked them to make him leader over them if he won the battle. He made this explicit agreement before he fought the war.

You should agree with the other party before you embark on the assignment, they are giving you. It would be best if you made it clear whether you are doing it for free or you are doing it with a price. Jephthah would have given his services for free. However, if Jephthah did not ask for a fee, they might have ended up being ungrateful and mistreated him as they did before.

Secondly, a gift to him would show the genuineness of their apologies. When you have wronged someone and are asking them for forgiveness, it would be great to offer them a gift if you are in a position to. This is because actions speak louder than words. When reconciling, various people in the Bible did it by offering gifts.

Jephthah tried to negotiate peace with the Ammonites before resorting to war (Judges 11:12-28). There was a misunderstanding between them and the Ammonites. Therefore, he gave them a detailed explanation and history in order to make peace with them. As a Christian, making peace with the other party should be your first priority whenever there is conflict, no matter how strong you are.

Wars usually result from pride whereby one person, organization, or country wants to prove that they are stronger than the other, which typically ends up in calamity, with both parties losing. The King of Ammon did not heed Jepthah’s words. Therefore, they had to go to war. The Holy Spirit approved this battle and promised Jephthah that God would make them win. Jephthah made a vow to God and trusted Him to give him victory over the Ammonites (Judges 11:29-33).

When God is by your side, you can never lose. God was by Jepthah's side, and as a result, they were victorious. Jephthah had promised God that if he made him win, he would give God whatever came first to meet him when he was coming from war (Judges 11:30-31). Unfortunately, his daughter came to meet him. He had only one child. He had no other sons and daughters but had to keep his promise to God. We should be careful of what we promise God because it is sinful to promise God something and fail to fulfill it. Jephthah acted by faith and kept his vow to God even though it meant sacrificing his only daughter (Judges 11:34-40).

Keeping promises is an act of faith. Many people give huge promises, and then when the time comes for them to fulfill them, they do not. This behavior makes them lose trust in people, and as a result, it prevents them from accessing more opportunities, thus making them stagnate in life. Be in control of your emotions when making promises. Do not promise out of feeling. However, if you make a promise, whether emotional or logical, ensure you fulfill it. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:2 (KJV) – "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

Jephthah defended his actions against the Ephraimites, who threatened to burn his house down (Judges 12:1-7). Jephthah judged Israel for six years and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

If we have faith in God, we will define ourselves by the definition God gives us, and we will not be inclined toward the weakness of our forefathers and family members. We need to have faith and go where God's blessings are. Jephthah left Gilead and moved to the land of Tob. The more we remain in sin, the more afflicted we will be. There is no need to stay in affliction when Jesus has allowed us to enjoy infinite blessings. It is an act of faith to forgive others and not hold grudges. It is an act of faith to fulfill our promises to God, and it is an act of faith to use our abilities to serve God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come to you in the name of Jesus. Please help me to live according to the purpose that you have given me. Please help me not to follow the evil traits of my family members and

forefathers. If there is any generational curse that may have befallen me, please break it. Take me from sin and lead me to righteousness.

Please enable me not to hold on to the place of affliction and guide me to the way of blessing. I forgive all those who have wronged me, and if there is any bad feeling towards them in my heart, I ask you to please take it away. Help me not to make promises out of emotions and to fulfill all the promises I have ever made if they are in accordance with your will. I pray this, trusting and believing in the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down the generational evil patterns in your family and ask God to help you break them.
2. Write down the evil things that are holding you back. It may be sins, an environment, or people. Ask God to untie your attachment to them.
3. Write down all the people who have wronged you and ask God to enable you to forgive them.
4. Write down all your unfulfilled promises and pledges (all righteous promises, do not fulfill sinful promises). Ask God to help you meet them.

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CHAPTER 56

THE FAITH OF RUTH

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Faith is shown when we care for others,

When our love goes beyond our sisters and brothers,

Ruth cared for Naomi like her own mother,

Her faith was evident that she cared for others.

Jesus was born from the lineage of Ruth,

Rich blessings will come if we follow the truth,

He is the bread of life, the living proof,

That if we live by faith, we can go beyond the roof.

The faith of Ruth is one to be emulated,

Biblical truth, in it we should be educated,

No action of faith should be underestimated,

No word of faith should be underrated.

Ruth cared for Naomi and shared in her affliction,

Pleasing God needs to be our first mission,

Faith in actions will make us transition,

Let us not wait longer but start the ignition.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Ruth was one of the people who wrought righteousness. Through faith, she pleased God and blessed multitudes beyond her realization. Faith goes a long way in improving the lives of people. When you do anything by faith, your action impacts people you know and those you do not know. For example, the Bible writers have influenced generations of which they are unaware. We read the words that the Holy Spirit inspired them and we are blessed.

According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Ruth means friend or friendship. The story of Ruth begins with a lady called Naomi, her mother-in-law. Naomi was married to a man named Elimelech. Together, they had two sons called Mahlon and Chilion. They were in the land of Moab, and their two sons married Moabite wives. One was named Orpah, and the other one was named Ruth. Elimelech died. After he died, his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, died. Therefore, Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth (Ruth 1:1-5).

Naomi decided to return to the land of Judah because she heard that the Lord had visited His people and provided them food to eat (Ruth 1:6). Naomi decided to leave Orpah and Ruth in Moab. Both of them refused to leave her, and they resolved to go to Judah with her (Ruth 1:10). Naomi told them to remain in Moab so that they may get husbands. Orpah listened to Naomi, and she kissed her goodbye, but Ruth clung to her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:14).

Ruth 1:15-16 (KJV) – "[15] And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. [16] And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

"And now tidings reached Moab, that "Jehovah had visited His people to give them bread." Naomi heard in it a call to return to her own land and home. According to eastern fashion, her daughters-

in-law accompanied her on the way. When Naomi deemed that duty of proper respect sufficiently discharged, she stopped to dismiss them—as she delicately put it—to their "mother's" houses, with tenderly spoken prayer, that after all their sorrow the God of Israel would give them rest in a new relationship, as they had dealt lovingly both with the dead and with her. Closely examined, her words are found to convey, although with most exquisite delicacy, that, if her daughters-in-law went with her, they must expect to remain forever homeless and strangers. She could offer them no prospect of wedded happiness in her own family, and she wished to convey to them, that no Israelite in his own land would ever wed a daughter of Moab. It was a noble act of self-denial on the part of the aged Hebrew widow by this plain speaking to strip herself of all remaining comfort, and to face the dark future, utterly childless, alone, and helpless. And when one of them, Orpah, turned back, though with bitter sorrow at the parting, Naomi had a yet more trying task before her. Ruth had, indeed, fully understood her mother-in-law's meaning; but there was another sacrifice which she must be prepared to make, if she followed Naomi. She must not only be parted from her people, and give up forever all worldly prospects, but she must also be prepared to turn her back upon her ancestral religion. But Ruth had long made her choice, and the words in which she intimated it have deservedly become almost proverbial in the church. There is such ardor and earnestness about them, such resolution and calmness, as to lift them far above the sphere of mere natural affection or sense of duty. They intimate the deliberate choice of a heart which belongs in the first place to Jehovah, the God of Israel (1:17), and which has learned to count all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge. Although the story of Ruth has been invested with romance from its sequel, there is nothing romantic about her present resolve. Only the sternest prose of poverty is before her. Not to speak of the exceedingly depressing influence of her language (1:13, 20, 21), Naomi had been careful to take from her any hope of a future, such as she had enjoyed in the past. In truth, the choice of Ruth is wholly unaccountable, except on the ground that she felt herself in heart and by conviction one of a Hebrew household—an Israelitish woman in soul and life, and that although she should in a sense be disowned by those with whom she had resolved to cast in her lot." – Bible History Old Testament, Volume 3, Page 160.1, Ellen G. White.

"There was stir in the quiet little village of Bethlehem—especially among the women —when Naomi unexpectedly returned after her long absence, and that in so altered circumstances. The lamentations of the widow herself made her even repudiate the old name of Naomi for Mara ("bitter"), for that "Jehovah" had "testified against," and "Shaddai" afflicted her. Whether or not

Naomi and her acquaintances really understood the true meaning of this "testifying" on the part of Jehovah, certain it is, that the temporary excitement of her arrival soon passed away, and the widow and her Moabite companion were left to struggle on alone in their poverty. Apparently no other near relatives of Elimelech were left, for Boaz himself is designated in the original as "an acquaintance to her husband," though the term indicates also relationship. And thus through the dreary winter matters only grew worse and worse, till at last early spring brought the barley-harvest." – Bible History Old Testament, Volume 3, Page 161.1, Ellen G. White.

Naomi loved her two daughters in law. Therefore, she wanted them to live happy lives and not face adversity with her. Both Orpah and Ruth loved Naomi. However, Ruth loved her more. Orpah's desire to get married again was more than her love for her mother-in-law, which is why she left her. Ruth's love for Naomi was more than her desire to get a husband and to live a comfortable life. Therefore, she decided to stick with Naomi, comfort her, and share her affliction.

Ruth was from Moab, but her interaction with Naomi made her know the God of Israel, the only true God. She believed in God. By faith, she acted righteously by showing genuine care for her mother-in-law. The Bible says in James 2:26 (KJV) – "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Ruth's faith was followed by action. Many people utter words to show that they care and believe in God, but few do activities that show genuine faith in God. Ruth was willing to live her entire life without a husband so that she could care for her mother-in-law. She was to be a foreigner in the land of Judah and had no guarantee of a good life there, but she still chose to stay with Naomi and strengthen her in hardship.

Ruth went to work in the field of Boaz so that she could provide for Naomi and herself. Boaz was related to Elimelech, Naomi's late husband. She asked Naomi for permission before going (Ruth 2:2). Ruth humbled herself and took the job of gleaning the field and gathering. When Boaz saw her doing that, he stopped her from doing that and gave her a higher position of supervising the people working in the field.

Ruth did not uplift herself; she humbled herself. Never make it your business to raise your rank. Follow God's purpose humbly and God will uplift you. Boaz commanded the young people not to touch Ruth and allowed her to drink from the water vessels the men had drawn (Ruth 2:7-9).

Ruth asked Boaz what has made him favor her that much (Ruth 2:10). Boaz responded to her in Ruth 2:11 (KJV) – "It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore." Boaz favored her because he heard everything Ruth had done for her mother-in-law.

Myron Golden says, "Every thought is a seed, every word is a seed, every deed is a seed, and every dollar is a seed that you sow into your future." The Bible says in Galatians 6:7 (KJV) – "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Ruth reaped what she sowed through her kind actions.

Some people have missed huge harvests because of the evil seeds they sowed. The words and actions of a person travel to places beyond that person's imagination. You can say something in Kenya and it affects someone in Guyana. You can do something in Norway, and it affects someone in the Solomon Islands. Moses secretly killed an Egyptian when he found him fighting with an Israelite and thought nobody saw him. He was shocked to realize that the news had spread and some people knew about it.

The Bible says in Luke 12:2-3 (KJV) – "[2] For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. [3] Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Whatever good or terrible thing one has done will surely come to light. Therefore, be intentional in living a righteous life. An opportunity may fail to be presented to you because of an evil deed you did to someone. The reverse is true. A vast opportunity may be delivered to you because someone spoke well of you and told them something good you did for them.

Some people have lost potential spouses because of their bad reputation, while some have gained due to their excellent reputation. Proverbs 22:1 (KJV) – "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." A good name can bring riches, but riches cannot buy a good reputation. Ruth gained a remarkable reputation with Boaz because of her righteous actions.

Ruth followed Naomi's advice and approached Boaz on the threshing floor, asking him to be her redeemer. She trusted that Boaz would act honorably and fulfill his duty as a kinsman (Ruth 3). Boaz did not disappoint her.

Ruth 4:13-22 (KJV) – "13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. 16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, 19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

Boaz proposed to Ruth as a result of her excellent reputation. She accepted Boaz as her husband and bore him a son, Obed, who became the grandfather of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. She became part of God's plan of salvation for all people (Ruth 4).

Philippians 2:3-4 (KJV) – "3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Ruth had her mother-in-law's interest above hers. It is easy to love one's mother because of the biological direct relation. Ruth loved Naomi even though they were not biologically related. Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law. It is not strange to see hatred between wives and their husbands' mothers. Some quarrel and fight a lot. Ruth was different. She genuinely loved her mother-in-law and went the extra mile to share in on her affliction.

Ruth's faith was remarkable because she was not born into the covenant community of Israel but chose to join them and worship their God. She demonstrated loyalty, courage, and obedience in her actions. She is an example of how God can use anyone who trusts in Him and follows His will.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me always to esteem others better than myself. Subdue all my selfishness and help me be selfless, just like Christ. Father, help me to always sow good words and deeds in people's lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- List the things you did today that showed you cared for others more than yourself. Do this activity every day at the end of the day as you evaluate.
- Make a weekly evaluation each Friday before the Sabbath and carry out an evaluation of the selfless deeds you have done to people throughout the week. Make a monthly and yearly evaluation as well at the end of the year.

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CHAPTER 57

THE FAITH OF QUEEN ESTHER

Esther's faith is a powerful and noble example,

She showed faith through obedience and being humble,

Trust in God made her stand tall and not stumble,

She was mighty in her works, receiving blessings more than double.

For the time would fail me to tell of the faith of Esther,

Who, through faith, rose from an orphan to a shining star,

Her influence was felt by people from near and far,

Her faith brought great results; it brought great power.

Through faith, Queen Esther wrought righteousness,

Through faith, she obtained tremendous promises,

Through faith, she took her captive people to blessedness,

Through faith, she proved that there is strength in holiness.

Like the Benz Slogan, Esther willed to do the best or nothing,

Her faith in God was not unstable; it brought up something,

Her faith gave her favor in the eyes of Ahasuerus, the King,

We can do the same or better if we entertain no doubting.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

One person who has not been mentioned in the verse above is Esther. However, her faith is not to be underrated. She may not be mentioned explicitly in Hebrews 11 (just like many great others who are not mentioned), but her faith is paramount in the history of the Jews and, by extension, in the history of this world. According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Esther means star. She was also known as Hadassah, which refers to a myrtle tree.

Esther was Abihail's daughter, who was the uncle of Mordecai (Esther 2:15). Therefore, Mordecai was an older cousin to Esther. The name Abihail means father or possessor of might. Mordecai took diligent care of Esther like his own daughter after the death of Esther's parents (Esther 2:7). Esther's faith blessed her people, who were taken as captives under King Ahasuerus. Trust in God will bring blessings to your family. It will bring blessings to your community, nation, and world.

Esther 2:10 (KJV) – "Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it."

Esther obeyed Mordecai's advice when she revealed no information about her family and people. This small act showed that Esther respected and obeyed her elders. She had no biological parents alive. Therefore, Mordecai was like her parent. This lesson presents a powerful lesson for adopted children. If you are an adopted child, you should obey and respect your guardians as if they are your biological parents.

Ephesians 6:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. [2] Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; [3] That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

The Bible tells us to obey our parents in the Lord, meaning we should abide by everything our parents tell us so long as their instructions do not contradict God's commandments. If your parents instruct you to put God first, obey that. If they tell you not to commit adultery, follow that. If they tell you not to take God's name in vain, follow that. Do not obey if they tell you not to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Take note that Mordecai did not tell Esther to lie. Instead, he told her to keep her origin a secret (it was revealed later on when it was highly necessary). Keeping secrets is not bad as long as the secrets do not contradict God's commandments. For example, hiding criminals or harmful and illegal drugs contradicts God's commandments. Therefore, it is sinful to keep such kind of secrets.

Esther got blessings because of obeying her parents. Many people have failed to acquire what they desire because of disobeying their fathers and mothers. Some students have been unable to do well in academics because they did not heed the instructions of their parents when they told them to work hard and take their studies seriously. Some have gotten deep into harmful addictions, which they find challenging to overcome because of ignoring their parents' advice. Some people have acquired chronic illnesses, leading some to death because they did not diligently listen to their parents' words. By faith, Esther obeyed and honored Mordecai.

Esther 2:12 (AMP) – "Now when it was each young woman's turn to go before King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with [sweet] spices and perfumes and the beauty preparations for women."

Esther was a naturally beautiful child of God, but she still had to prepare for twelve months. This verse shows us how important preparation is. Preparation is vital even for Christians. It is prudent as a genuine Christian to prepare before sitting for an examination, making a speech, and doing anything virtuous.

Some people think they should not be assiduous enough because they are Christians, and the power of God will help cover their lack of diligence. This kind of thought is a great folly. By doing that, they are putting God to the test. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 6:16 (KJV) – "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God." Lack of preparation and lack of meticulousness is putting God to the test.

Esther 2:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. [9] And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women."

The Bible records that Esther found favor in the eyes of Hegai, the women's keeper. She pleased Hegai, and she obtained his kindness. Even though she pleased the women's keeper, Hegai did not take her directly to the king. He first took her to the place of preparation. Therefore, do not for a moment think that God does not love you because He has placed you in the area of preparation.

God did not take the Israelites through the wilderness because He hated them. He took them there because He loved them. So, pay attention to the place of preparation. The preparation location is meant to properly equip you to handle the blessings that God has in store for you. It is impossible to take someone who is not computer literate and give them a job analyzing financial data using Microsoft Excel and expect them to do well. They need to be computer literate first. One cannot take a child who has not gone to school and give them an engineering, medical job, or any other job. They need to be equipped first with the necessary skills for that job.

Matthew 5:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: [2] And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying."

The Bible says that Jesus spoke after He was set. In other words, He made a speech after He was prepared and ready. If the Son of God, One who is equal with God, One with no sin, prepares before He speaks, how much more should we mere mortals prepare? Preparation is not a lack of faith. Preparation is faith in action.

The Israelites stayed in the wilderness for forty years before entering the Promised Land. Esther remained in the court for one year before meeting the king. Probably in that court, she was taught on mannerisms of the palace, laws, and how she was supposed to conduct herself before the king. They were taught essential lessons to fit them as brides for the king.

The period of the place of preparation is different for everyone. For some, it may be three months. For others, it may be two years, while for others, it may be fifty or more. God called Abraham when he was seventy-five years old but gave him a child when he was one hundred years old. This means that Abraham had to take twenty-five years in the place of preparation before receiving the blessing. Pay attention to the site of preparation. Do what has brought you there. Prepare. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) – "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness."

Esther 2:13-15 (NKJV) – "[13] Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. [14] In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name. [15] Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her."

Esther did not request anything that Hegai, the women's keeper, had not advised. She obeyed and respected authority. She understood that Hegai knew what was best for the king more than her because he served in the king's palace. In the court of preparation, Hegai acted like a mentor to Esther. Things would be easier if you had mentors or advisors in the fields you want to venture into.

If you want to be a lawyer, find a mentor who is in the area of law. If you want to be a businessperson, find a mentor who has succeeded in business. If you want to be a doctor, find a mentor in the medical field. Find a mentor in whatever area you want to venture into. It will help you avoid mistakes, and as a result, your path to success will be shorter than if you had no mentor.

Esther's obedience to authority was easy because she had practiced obedience at home when she obeyed Mordecai, who was like her parent. Charity begins at home. It would be easier to have good character outside your home if you have good character at home.

Some find it a significant burden upon themselves because they try extremely hard to pretend by showing the public a character that is not genuinely inherent in them. They may pretend for a short

while, but the pretense will only go for an abbreviated time because they are displaying behavior that they are not accustomed to, since they did not learn and practice that from home. When we practice all the proper habits at home, such as discipline, sacrificing for the good of others, generosity, and kindness, it will be easy to have the same character in public.

Esther 2:16-17 (NKJV) – "[16] So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. [17] The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Esther successfully went through the process of preparation, and since God was by her side, she was favored by King Ahasuerus. If you please, God, he will make people favor you. The Bible says in Proverbs 21:1 (KJV) – "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." The heart of men is created and sustained by God. He can turn them in whatever direction He chooses to, meaning He can turn them in your direction.

Daniel 1:9 (KJV) – "Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." God turned the heart of the prince of the eunuchs towards Daniel, causing him to favor Daniel. The Bible also says in Proverbs 16:7 (KJV) – "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." When your ways please God, God can make even your enemies favor you.

Esther 2:21-23 (KJV) – "[21] In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [22] So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. [23] And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king."

Mordecai informed Esther about Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials who were angry with him and were planning to kill the king. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:27 (KJV) – "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Mordecai could not approach the king directly but could approach Esther, his relative, and the king's wife. Be cautious; life is spiritual. There is a reason behind everything that happens in your life. Nothing

is accidental. There is a reason you meet some people, and there is a reason some words are said in your presence and are not said to others.

It was not a coincidence that Mordecai was at the king's gate when the two officials made those evil plans. Mordecai did not just sleep or stay idle with that information. Instead, he did something with it. Ask God to show you what to do with any knowledge that crosses your path, and you will be surprised at what will happen.

There is a reason certain information comes your way, no matter how unimportant it may seem and who the carrier of the message is. Some people neglect and reject information from a person they lowly esteem. Many have been bypassed with vital information that they really needed because it came from someone poor, younger than them, or lower than them in educational status.

Mordecai did his best with the information he acquired when he shared it with Esther. When you gain knowledge from the Bible or any good knowledge from other books you read, and you think it might be beneficial to someone, be sure to share it. Sharing knowledge is putting knowledge to effective use. Sharing or teaching makes you retain the information more. It makes you bless others with insight they did not have before. Do not assume that because something is familiar to you, it is common to everyone else.

A Biblical perspective might be common to you but not conversant with your closest friends. Surprisingly, when studying the Bible, the Holy Spirit may give you insight into a verse He has not given anyone else ever since the world began. The Bible allows you to be unique. More people get blessed when you share what you have learned from God's Word.

The information that Mordecai heard at the gate was familiar to him but not common to Esther or the king. When Esther got that information, she shared it with the king. She did not allow the gained knowledge to stop at her feet. Sharing information is an act of faith. Therefore, make it a habit when you listen to an online sermon or read a devotional article to share it with people. Do not let knowledge stop at you. You were created to be a blessing.

Like the persistent jingle of an ice cream truck in summer, constantly invite people to church. By transmitting that crucial information, Esther saved the king from death. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. God's Word is the only Word that can save sinners from death. Therefore,

share God's Word. Secondly, doing good is for your own benefit, and evil-doing results to one's detriment.

The Bible says in Proverbs 26:27 (KJV) – "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him." If Bigthan and Teresh succeeded in killing the king, probably Esther and Mordecai, together with the Jews, would not have escaped Herman's plot which happened afterward. When you share the Word of Truth, not only will you be transmitting blessings to others, but you will also be transmitting blessings to yourself. Use all the opportunities that come your way to do good, and you will never regret it.

Esther 3:10-15 (KJV) – "[10] And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. [11] And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. [12] Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. [13] And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. [14] The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. [15] The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed."

King Ahasuerus signed a covenant with Haman to allow him to do with the Jews as he pleased. Plans were set to destroy all the Jews. The plans seemed cast in stone because the orders were published and sent everywhere.

"Through Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in Medo-Persia, Satan worked at this time to counterwork the purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him worshipful reverence. Scorning to "lay hands on Mordecai alone," Haman plotted "to destroy all

the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Esther 3:6." – Prophets and Kings, Page 600.2, Ellen G. White.

"The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. The reverence of God's people for His law is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath." – Prophets and Kings, Page 605.2, Ellen G. White.

Esther 4:10-17 (NKJV) – "[10] Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: [11] "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go into the king these thirty days." [12] So they told Mordecai Esther's words. [13] And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. [14] For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" [15] Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: [16] "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish!" [17] So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him."

Through Hathach, Mordecai told Esther all that Haman had planned. Mordecai told Esther that if Haman's plans succeeded, she might not escape the fate that would befall the Jews because she was one of them. Esther's situation was like being between a rock and a hard place. She risked death whether she acted or not. When we are compelled to move by faith, we often face such decisions.

If Esther went to the king, she risked death but stood a chance of her life and her people's lives being saved. If she failed to go, she risked death and stood no chance of anything good happening to her and her people. The story of Esther is similar to the story of the four leprous men in 2 Kings Chapter 7. If the men went into the city, they risked being killed, but they stood a chance of getting

food. They risked dying from hunger if they did not go into the city. Fortunately, they decided to go, and their step of faith resulted in great riches.

Esther made a decision of faith to go to the king and said, “If I perish, I perish.” We need to exercise faith and make such decisions. When God sends you to a strange land for a mission, do not be afraid to go because of the unforeseen circumstances you are likely to encounter, or you think you will experience.

We do not know about tomorrow. You may fail to go to save your life then a calamity befalls you causing you to die. If you had gone for that evangelical mission, even if you lost your life while in it, you would have at least blessed more souls.

I once had a conversation with someone from my church who we schooled together at the same university. We were talking about having some university courses fall on Saturday. She told me she had decided to take Saturday classes to make it to graduation that year. We were in the same year. I told her I would not take classes on Sabbath because God holds the future and not ourselves. I told her I might graduate that year and die the next day. She laughed it off and asked me, “Now, what is going to kill you?”

Our future is in God’s hands. Our lives should portray that knowledge. I have heard people saying they have not been able to return tithes because the money they earn can barely cater to their needs. Their lack of faith blocks them from encountering miracles in their lives. Luke 17:19 (KJV) – “And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Often, when Jesus did miracles to people, He applauded their faith. He was delighted by the faith they showed Him, so He gave them the desires of their hearts. In a mentorship session with Zack, Joe, Adrian, Karl Peters and Christian, Zack asked me a question concerning miracles. He asked me, “How comes we do not see the miracles that were being performed by Jesus in church today?” I used to ask the same question too.

Miracles may not seem common today among believers because many Christians do not have faith. Many confess that they believe in God, but very few actually trust Him. John 20:30 says that Jesus did many signs and wonders in the presence of His disciples. What is another name for disciples? Another name for disciples is followers. Jesus did many signs and wonders in the presence of His

followers. Those who followed Him everywhere He went witnessed more signs and wonders than those who did not. We shall witness astounding miracles if we follow Jesus everywhere.

John 21:25 (AMP) - "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were recorded one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

In John 21:25, John says that Jesus did many great things which if they were to be recorded, the world would not contain the books that would be written. Among the disciples, John was the one closest to Jesus. Being the closest one to Jesus, He witnessed more wondrous things that the others did not. Thus, he wrote what he wrote in John 21:25.

“The church is not now the separate and peculiar people she was when the fires of persecution were kindled against her. How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! I saw that if the church had always retained her peculiar, holy character, the power of the Holy Spirit which was imparted to the disciples would still be with her. The sick would be healed, devils would be rebuked and cast out, and she would be mighty and a terror to her enemies.” – Early Writings, Page 227.1, Ellen G. White.

It is better to try and fail than to live to regret. If you have a business idea that is bothering your mind, take a step and try it. Do not fear failure. If you fail to work on it, you still risk financial ruin in the future because you can get retrenched from your job, or a time will come when you have to retire, and once you retire, you may not have much financial freedom to live the life you desire. However, if you work on your business idea, you risk it failing, but on the other hand, you stand a chance to have more financial freedom to live the life of your dreams.

God is highly pleased by people who move by faith instead of fear. Therefore, if you move by faith, committing all that you do to Him, He will bless whatever you are doing abundantly. Esther decided to enter the king’s palace despite risking death. John 12:25 (AMP) – “The one who loves his life [eventually] loses it [through death], but the one who hates his life in this world [and is concerned with pleasing God] will keep it for life eternal.” She told Mordecai to gather people to fast and pray for her. Fellowship is vital.

There is more strength when we engage with one another in fellowship than when we pray as individuals. The Bible says in Matthew 18:20 (KJV) – “For where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It also says in Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) – "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Esther told them not only to pray but also to fast. Prayer is mighty when it is backed up by fasting. Mordecai cooperated with Esther. There is power when believers unite like a pack of crayons coloring the same canvas concerning a matter.

Esther 5:2 (KJV) – "And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So, Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter."

After Esther and her people had fasted and prayed, Esther went in to see the king. Immediately she entered the palace, she obtained favor in his sight. Prayer and fasting can bring more favor to the life of an individual.

Mark 9:28-29 (KJV) – "[28] And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, why could not we cast him out? [29] And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

The disciples had prayed, but they were not able to cast out that demon because they had not fasted, and that demon could only be cast out through prayer and fasting. Esther did not lose her life as she had previously feared, but she obtained the favor of requesting the king. The king favored her greatly, and he was willing to give her half of the kingdom (Esther 5:3).

Strategically, Esther invited the King and Haman to a banquet (Esther 5:4). She approached the king with grace and wisdom instead of accusing Haman directly. She waited for the right moment to reveal her request and expose Haman's evil scheme (Esther 7:1-6). Esther did not solely think of her own benefit. She thought of the benefit of others. She showed compassion and courage for her people, even after Haman was hanged (Esther 8:3-6).

Esther 8:11 (KJV) – "Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey." Esther's faith brought tremendous results. King Ahasuerus granted Esther her wishes. He even exceeded her desire and gave her people more than they requested.

They had asked for their lives to be spared, but he ended up giving them the riches of the people who would assault them. Faith in God gives you things that are beyond your wildest desires.

Esther 9:12 (KJV) – "And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? And it shall be done." The king favored Esther so much that after he had granted her request, he asked her if she needed anything more. As a result, Haman's ten sons were hanged upon the gallows (Esther 9:14), and the Jews killed three hundred men in Shushan (Esther 9:15). Through the faith of Esther, the Jews overcame their enemies. If we fully trust in God, we shall bring blessings to more people. Unemployment rates in our countries and cities shall reduce, economies shall thrive, and we shall be more stable socially and politically.

"In ancient times the Lord worked in a wonderful way through consecrated women who united in His work with men whom He had chosen to stand as His representatives. He used women to gain great and decisive victories. More than once, in times of emergency, He brought them to the front and worked through them for the salvation of many lives. Through Esther the queen, the Lord accomplished a mighty deliverance for His people. At a time when it seemed that no power could save them, Esther and the women associated with her, by fasting and prayer and prompt action, met the issue, and brought salvation to their people." – Daughters of God, Page 45.3, Ellen G. White.

Esther's faith is an inspiring example of how God can use anyone who is willing to trust Him and obey His will. Esther's story also shows how God can turn a seemingly hopeless situation into a miraculous deliverance for His people.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to always obey my parents, elders, and all those who are in authority in the Lord. Please help me to serve everybody faithfully. Help me to adequately prepare before I conduct

anything and help me not to despise the moment of preparation. Help me to delight in prayer and fasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

- What problem is your society facing that is troubling you? Write it down. You can fast and pray for it.
- What is the most you can do about that problem? Prayerfully ask God to provide you with a solution.

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CHAPTER 58

THE FAITH OF MORDECAI

Mordecai's faith placed him on the peak,

Like Esther's regal attire, truly unique,

Boldly he stood, unwavering and strong,

Through faith and love, his troubles were gone.

Be strong and courageous, embracing faith,

For faith in God is life, and doubt is death,

Just like Mordecai, who stood firm in his place,

His faith was like a student that is given a test.

Through trials and tests, he remained unshaken,

With a heart full of faith, the storms did not take him,

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,

In Mordecai's story, this truth is shown and explored.

A Biblical hero with a faith so profound,

Like Esther, his purpose in God's plan was found,

He was greatly rewarded, for God he did please,

Through faith, God's purpose does bliss.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35]

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Mordecai is a paramount figure of faith in the Bible. Mordecai's faith was a radiant lighthouse guiding the ship of his beliefs through the stormy seas of doubt. Like a phoenix rising from the embers, Mordecai's faith emerged stronger after every trial. His faith was a compass navigating the uncharted territories of existence with unwavering purpose. He did all he could with his little power to save the Israelites from destruction. He was not rich or prominent in rank, but he did what many in positions of major influence have chosen not to do.

Faith is exercised best when we do all we can and leave the rest to God. We should not waste God's gifts by expecting God to do everything for us, including what we can do with our bodies and brains. Faith is meant to help us with our weaknesses. Faith comes to fill in the space that is left by what we cannot do.

Esther 2:5-7 (KJV) – "[5] Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; [6] Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon had carried away. [7] And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."

We often focus on the story of Esther but pay little attention to the story of Mordecai. Mordecai was an older cousin to Esther who took part in the upbringing of Esther since her parents died. The name Mordecai means little man. He was the son of Jair, whose name means enlightener. Mordecai's father, Jair, was the son of Shimei, whose name means famous. Shimei was the son of Kish, whose name means a bow. They were from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of all tribes of Israel (1 Samuel 9:21).

Laden with poverty, they did not expect much to result from their lives. However, by faith, Mordecai trained Esther in the ways of God. The lesson we learn from Mordecai is that we should be of righteous influence to our young ones and subordinates. Harsh and insulting words should not be heard when giving instructions at home or anywhere else. Mordecai took care of Esther as

if she was his daughter. It is not unusual to find people mistreating their younger relatives whom they have been entrusted to care for, particularly those whose parents are dead.

Orphans are sometimes mistreated because they have nobody to plead for them. Sometimes, a parent may be busy at work and leave their children in the hands of a relative, and the relative ends up abusing that child. Mordecai was different. He treated Esther as his daughter, not knowing and expecting that Esther would be of prodigious help to him one day. The seeds we plant daily will always grow, whether they are bad seeds or good seeds. Therefore, be intentional in planting good seeds.

Esther 2:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. [9] And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women."

Mordecai genuinely loved Esther, so he presented her with an opportunity. It is not unusual to see people who claim they love you not presenting you with opportunities that you need the most while they have the ability to do so. Sometimes and often, people who claim to love you may offer to buy you expensive alcohol that harms your body but cannot give you that money. Being given a handout in the form of money is less beneficial than being given an opportunity that will be of a lifetime benefit to you.

Some friends and relatives will not give you opportunities because they do not want you to surpass them in achievements. They fear competition. They are comfortable with you doing good but not better than them. They do not know that the light is reflected back to them when one shines a light. For instance, when you switch on a torch in the dark towards an object you want to see, the light illuminates you and makes you visible too. Your intention was not to make yourself visible but to make the object visible, but the rule of nature comes in handy and makes you visible. This rule applies when we help others.

Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was not jealous of her, nor did he have the evil spirit of competition between him and her. He heard of an opportunity to replace Queen Vashti and quickly told Esther about it. This action was clear that he wanted the best for his cousin. Many people will tell you they wish you the best, but they wish you the worst. The best way to know someone truly wishes you the best is through their actions.

Despite Esther and Mordecai being poor, they did not have low ambitions. It is quite common for many people to think they are forever destined to be where they are because they are where they are. Faith is the hope of things not seen. The people with a disability and the sick people who approached Jesus to receive healing approached him because they had hope for transformation.

I believe in the days of Jesus, there might have been other sick people who did not go to Jesus because they thought that their situation was cast in stone. Some people do not attend church because they cannot see how it will benefit them. A lack of hope is why many people get into depression and commit suicide. Mordecai had hope for a better life. He had probably studied the scriptures and realized it was not God's will for people to be in captivity like they were. When he heard of the opportunity for a queen, he did not look down upon Esther or discourage her.

Some loving parents constantly discourage their children because they cannot see hope. They might think that because nobody in their family or lineage attained a certain level of success, it is impossible to go beyond that level. God told Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth to call their child John (Luke 1:13), but the friends and relatives opposed that name because nobody in their family had it (Luke 1:61).

Faith in God breaks barriers. Faith in God will make one go beyond the achievements of their family members. Faith in God goes beyond man-made culture and tradition. Mordecai believed in God. He believed that it was God who sets up and removes Kings. Therefore, he sent Esther to apply for the position of queen.

Esther 2:10 (KJV) – "Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it."

Mordecai instructed Esther wisely out of love. Out of malice, some people will advise you to do the wrong thing even though they know it is wrong. They wish to see your downfall, not your success. For example, a lady may face marital issues and then goes to her friend or sister or any

other relative for advice (which is not advisable because one should seek God's advice). Her friend or sister intentionally gives her the wrong advice, worsening her marriage. Secretly, behind her back, her friend goes to seduce her husband.

These deceptive counsels are not just among women. They are common in people of both genders and all ages. Mordecai wished for Esther's success. Therefore, he gave her sound advice. He told her not to reveal her people or her family. A person with a close relationship with God, like Mordecai, will have his thoughts aligned with God's and will be led by the Spirit of God. Therefore, he or she will give you Godly counsel. You need to ask God to give you the gift of discerning spirits so that you know who is giving you the right counsel. Most importantly, you need to study God's Word to distinguish between truth and error.

Esther 2:11 (KJV) – "And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her."

Mordecai was a true mentor to Esther. He did not let go of Esther's hand even when she was not in close contact with her. Mordecai did his best not to lose touch with her. He walked every step of the way with her and kept visiting her even when she was in her place of preparation. Mordecai did not count it success that Esther was favored by Hegai and placed on the preparation court. He wanted to guide her till she sat on the throne. As we can see in Esther's story, he guided her even when she was queen. Mentors should not leave their mentees at any point because the Devil does not sleep. Satan is always looking for the smallest loophole to bring someone down.

You may study hard and succeed in academics, then the Devil comes after you have received your examination results and realize that you have passed. Satan has attacked many brilliant school students and did his best to ensure they did not finish high school. If you closely examine the people who dropped out of high school, you will realize they were not foolish people. Most of them were highly intelligent. Many of them got high grades in their primary/elementary final exams. The Devil may wait for someone to finish high school and then attack them at the university level to ensure they do not complete college.

You might have seen people who died when they went drinking with friends to celebrate their success. I have seen musicians who started out as gospel artists, and through God's favor, they were successful in music, only to be attacked by Satan at the height of their success and switch to

secular music, which gradually ended up killing their music careers. Mordecai stuck by Esther and did not leave her. We should always pray for our mentees and share with them God's Word. If they, unfortunately, fall off track, the blame should not lie with us. We should have a clear conscious that we have done our best.

Esther 2:21-23 (KJV) – "[21] In those days, while Mordecai sat in the King's gate, two of the King's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus. [22] And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the King thereof in Mordecai's name. [23] And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the King."

Mordecai did not idle at the King's gate. He was diligent even when he was there. Information reached him while at the King's gate concerning Bigthan and Teresh's plot against the King. The information was wicked, and if executed successfully, it would have resulted in the death of the King.

When Mordecai heard that information, he did not allow it to stop at him. He did all he could in his low position and transmitted it to Esther. Mordecai could not directly access King Ahasuerus, but he could access Esther because she was his relative and the King's wife. Therefore, he gave Esther vital information that saved the King's life. We should not be like rivers that have inlets and no outlets.

We are created to be a blessing, and God wants us to use everything He has given us to bless other people. When you read a Bible verse, share it with at least one person. Let no vital information stop on you. Do not be like a broken telephone. Give whatever comes your way. When you give, you become more enriched.

John C. Maxwell says, "No one gets rich without enriching others." Myron Golden says it is better to have one million dollars of cash flow than to have ten million dollars stored in a bank account. The third servant in Matthew 25, who hid (stored) his talent underground, did not receive anything more, but the first two servants increased their talents by using them.

This principle does not apply to money only. It applies to knowledge and every other good gift that God has given you. Some people give excuses that they have not been placed in places of

opportunity. You might despise where you are, but that is the best place of opportunity that God has placed you in. The earlier you realize that, the better.

Mordecai was placed at the gate, and he excellently utilized his environment to rise to greater ranks than those above him. Joseph used his gift of dream interpretation while in prison, which led him to be given the position of ruler in Egypt by Pharaoh (Genesis 41:43). Hagar could not see water until God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water (Genesis 21:19). Ask God to open your eyes to see the opportunities around you, and when He shows you, use them properly.

Esther 3:1-6 (KJV) – "[1] After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. [2] And all the King's servants, that were in the King's gate, bowed, and reverenced Haman: for the King had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. [3] Then the King's servants, which were in the King's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the King's commandment? [4] Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. [5] And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. [6] And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai."

"Through Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in Medo-Persia, Satan worked at this time to counterwork the purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him worshipful reverence. Scorning to "lay hands on Mordecai alone," Haman plotted "to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Esther 3:6." – Prophets and Kings, Page 600.2, Ellen G. White.

Jeremiah 17:5 (KJV) – "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." The Bible also says in Jeremiah 17:7 (KJV) – "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Mordecai trusted in God alone and did not give Haman worshipful reverence. We should respect all human beings but worship God alone. We should not put anyone above God.

God says in the first commandment in Exodus 20:3 (KJV) – "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Mordecai heeded this commandment and understood that there can be none greater than God. He knew Haman was a high-ranking official, but he did not bow down to him. Instead, he bowed down to the One with the highest rank, God.

We may not physically carve idols to worship them, but we worship them often without knowing. Many will break God's rules when promised a certain amount of money. Such people have made money their idol. Others would go to work on Sabbath because their bosses told them to, thus, putting their superiors above God. When told to choose between a church event and a concert in town of a popular celebrity, which one would you go to?

Esther 4:1 (KJV) – "When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry."

By faith, Mordecai humbled himself and put on sackcloth and ashes. Humility is a powerful act of faith in God. Mordecai was not embarrassed. Thus, he went into the midst of the city to cry a bitter cry. If we move fervently by the guidance of God's spirit and go heads on for what we want without feeling embarrassed, we will surely get more results than we desire.

The Bible says in Matthew 5:4 (KJV) – "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Do not despair when something happens while you chase your dreams and you get embarrassed. If that happens, rejoice and be exceeding glad because God has set a magnanimous blessing for you to comfort you that you may not even remember the embarrassment that you faced. However, do not indulge in sin and do not look for embarrassment or a state of mourning intentionally. Follow your God-given purpose, and if it happens accidentally that you find yourself in such a situation, stay strong, determined, and optimistic. God is with you.

Esther 4:4 (KJV) – "So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not."

Many have failed to witness the results of being diligent in their purposes because they gave up too easily and quickly. They expected their work to produce results immediately since God had

communicated to them the purpose He had set for them. Once they face challenges, they give up and want nothing to do with the calling that God has given them.

Some pastors and evangelists have stopped preaching because they heard someone negatively commenting about them. Some have been discouraged by relatives and friends who have given them all 'good' and 'sound' reasons not to follow their calling. The Bible tells us that even the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him (John 7:5).

Esther, who was Mordecai's relative, told Mordecai to remove his sackcloth, but Mordecai refused because Mordecai was steadfast in his purpose. Mordecai had hope that it was possible for something to be done. Therefore, by faith and believing in what he had not yet seen, he continued with his protests.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in a better America even though he did not live to see it. He was assassinated because of his protests against segregation, but he constantly held on to his belief. Years after he died, history was written in the United States of America by electing Barrack Obama as the first black President in 2008 who was inaugurated in 2009 and served till 2016. Mordecai loved Esther but chose not to swim in the comfortable pool of mediocrity because he believed that the Jews could be in a better state than they were.

Esther 4:12-14 (KJV) – "[12] And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. [13] Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the King's house, more than all the Jews. [14] For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Mordecai did his best to convince Esther of the fate that would befall them if Haman's plans succeeded. By faith, he believed that Esther could change her mind since she had previously said that it was impossible for her to help them because she was not allowed to enter the King's palace for thirty days.

Mordecai convinced Esther and urged her to shun fear and take a step of faith and enter the King's palace. It is an act of faith when we encourage people to do what they think is impossible for the glory of God.

Esther 4:16-17 (KJV) – "[16] Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. [17] So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him."

"The crisis that Esther faced demanded quick, earnest action; but both she and Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, their own efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for communion with God, the source of her strength. "Go," she directed Mordecai, "gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" – Daughters of God, Page 46.5, Ellen G. White.

Mordecai convinced Esther, and she urged him to gather all the Jews present in Shushan and fast for her for three days. Mordecai did as Esther had commanded him even though she was her junior in age and like a daughter to her. Some people will never follow the advice of someone who is below. For instance, some parents cannot allow their children to advise them because they are younger than them.

God is in every living thing. He can use anybody to pass His message. It will not put you in a lower position if you humbly follow the Godly counsel of your children. Also, children, when giving your parents counsel, do it with respect, not like you are demeaning them. Mordecai cooperated with Esther, gathered the Jews, and they fasted and prayed for Esther.

Esther 5:9-13 (KJV) – "[9] Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the King's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. [10] Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. [11] And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the King had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the King. [12] Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the King unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the King. [13] Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate."

Haman thought he was invited because he was more special than everyone else. He also recalled how the King had promoted and gifted him with great riches each time he invited him. However, he was angry because Mordecai never bowed down to him.

Esther 5:14 (KJV) – "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the King that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the King unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made."

Haman told his wife and friends how he hated Mordecai. His wife Zeresh advised him to make gallows fifty cubits high and tell the King to hang Mordecai on them. That was a terrible idea. However, Haman was thrilled with that idea because he was wicked. We should be careful of the advice from our family members and friends. We should not follow any counsel not in line with God's Word.

In Psalm 1:1 (KJV), the Bible says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" This verse means that whoever obeys ungodly advice attracts curses. When Job's wife advised him to curse God and die, he did not obey. He was willing to stick to God through thick and thin, life and death.

Like Haman, Adam obeyed ungodly advice from his wife, which brought the entire world into an absolute debacle. Often, the Devil uses people you love the most to get you into temptations and rob your destiny.

Esther 6:1-3 (NKJV) – "[1] That night the King could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the King. [2] And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthan and Teresh, two of the King's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [3] Then the King said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the King's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Lack of sleep caused King Ahasuerus to be brought the book of the Records of the Chronicles. God works in mysterious ways. God does not forget any good thing you have done, no matter how small. Sometimes God may seem to have forgotten because of the challenges you are facing. He still remembers. When the right time comes, God will open the windows of heaven for you at a

time you are least expecting. When Mordecai did that kind action to save the King's life, he was not expecting anything.

The best investment you can ever make in life is acting righteously everywhere you go at all times. Faith in God brings more fruit than all fertile lands, all gold mines, all blue-chip company stocks, and all other riches in the world combined. The King was amazed to learn about Mordecai and was shocked to realize that nothing had been done to him to compensate for his kind action. He started thinking about how he was going to gift him. At that particular moment, God had steered the heart of the King towards a poor, humble, but righteous man who sat at the gate.

Esther 6:6-10 (NKJV) – "[6] So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" [7] And Haman answered the King, "For the man whom the King delights to honor, [8] let a royal robe be brought which the King has worn, and a horse on which the King has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. [9] Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the King's most noble princes that he may array the man whom the King delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!' "[10] Then the King said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the King's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken."

The King consulted Haman, Mordecai's enemy, to uplift Mordecai. God will sometimes use your enemies to elevate you. That may be one reason God still keeps your enemies alive. If Haman had been dead before the King chose to uplift Mordecai, Mordecai probably could not have gotten the honor he got. The King asked Haman how the person whom the King delights to honor should be treated. Haman thought that the King wanted to honor him. Therefore, he went ahead to list lofty gifts that portrayed honor.

Haman was probably the highest-ranking official in Shushan, and he was exposed to good things from the palace, and he was very rich. If the King had asked a lowly servant in the palace the question he asked Haman, that servant would have probably mentioned lowly gifts slightly above his level. To clarify this point, if a company owner or investor wants to gift someone with an expensive gift, the best person to ask is the Chief Executive Officer of that company and not a

janitor because the CEO is highly likely to be more exposed and will probably recommend a more expensive gift than a janitor.

The King had to ask the highest official because he desired to honor Mordecai with great substance. Therefore, when you see your enemies higher than you, do not feel discouraged. Do not lose sight of the shore, calm waters await beyond the storm. God has put them there for a reason. He may have placed them there so that they can lift you.

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 28:30 (KJV) – "Thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shall not gather the grapes thereof." This verse is one of the listed curses that people who are disobedient to God will get. The question is, the house they have built, who is going to live in them? The vineyards that they have planted, who is going to eat from them?

Proverbs 13:22 (KJV) – "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." Please do not tamper with your enemy's effort when you see him building a house or progressing in life. He may be building a house and making progress for you. However, do not depend on this. Focus on God and serve Him wholeheartedly. God has innumerable ways to bless you.

Haman was higher in rank than Mordecai, but unlike the other people in Shushan, Mordecai never bowed down to Haman. Instead, he bowed down to God. If you esteem God before people, God will make people who despise you and those above you respect you.

People disobey God's rules to get favor from men. For example, some choose to break the Sabbath to get favor from their bosses. To their disappointment, the bosses treat them worse than before. If you remain steadfast in keeping the commandments of God, people will respect you. Some may despise you at the present when you are keeping them, but they will eventually honor you in the future.

Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, [30] who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life."

Esther 7:10 (KJV) – “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the King’s wrath pacified.”

Proverbs 26:27 (KJV) – “Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.” This verse was proved by Haman when he was hanged on the gallows that he had made to hang Mordecai. Matthew 7:12 (KJV) – “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Haman would not have loved to be hanged on those gallows, but he wanted someone else to be hanged on them.

Therefore, before you do anything to someone, ask if you would love the same to be done to you. If not, then do not do it to someone else. For instance, some people know that alcohol harms their health but have no problem buying it for others. If it is not good for you, it is not good for someone else. Mordecai did one small, good action to the King, and the King rewarded him heavily. Sometimes, you may do well to someone, and they fail to appreciate it. Do not worry, and do not stop doing well. God will reward you; God’s reward has no limitations since the Lord is limitless.

Esther 8:1-2 (KJV) – “[1] On that day did the King Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews’ enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the King; for Esther had told what he was unto her. [2] And the King took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.”

God rewarded Mordecai’s faith by enriching him from sitting at the gate to holding an elevated position at the palace. He was given the ring that Haman once had. Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” God greatly rewards those who have faith. When we do something right, we should do it because God tells us to and not expect rewards from our righteous actions.

However, unlike man, God will not allow you to do something without getting rewarded. You may not always receive that reward immediately, but you will surely get it. Luke 6:38 (KJV) – “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

Esther 8:15 (KJV) – "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad."

Proverbs 29:2 (KJV) – "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Everyone in Shushan rejoiced when they saw Mordecai, including the non-Jews. They were delighted to see him arrayed in royal apparel and with a crown of gold. People rejoice when a righteous man is put in a position of authority because a righteous person will administer justice and make decisions that uplift society. Therefore, the population in Shushan was happy when King Ahasuerus uplifted Mordecai's position.

Esther 9:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] For Mordecai was great in the King's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. [5] Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them."

Mordecai kept on rising and rising because he honored God. Stagnation is not from God. Proverbs 4:18-19 (KJV) – "[18] But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. [19] The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." God wants to keep lifting you higher and higher. That is why He wants you to obey Him. If you show excellence at the stage you are currently in, God will take you to the next level.

It is God who promotes, not men. God promotes when you show him faithfulness at the level that you are in. He can prove that you will be faithful at the next level through your faithfulness at your current level. In Matthew 25, when the first and second servants showed good stewardship of their talents, their master welcomed them to dine with him at the feast.

The first servant was given the talent of the lazy third servant (Matthew 25:28) because he showed his actions and proved to the master that he would be faithful with that talent. The first one was given and not the second one, probably because the master knew that it was the first one who would give back the highest return.

Many times, God acts the same way when blessing men. God has infinite resources. However, He gives more resources to those who would use them for the greatest good. For example, a professed Christian might be selfish and not want to help anyone except himself. God will probably not give

him/her many resources because they would go to waste if He gave them to him. On the other hand, there might be an unbeliever who is very generous and always supports charitable causes. God may give that unbeliever more because through him, many children will be educated, the poor will be taken care of, hospital bills will be paid, and a lot of good will be done.

Daniel 1:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. [2] And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god."

God entrusted Nebuchadnezzar with His vessels more than He trusted Jehoiakim, even though Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king. Jehoiakim was born into a God-fearing family since he was the son of King Josiah. Despite this, he did evil in the sight of God. Nebuchadnezzar might not have known the Most High God, but he acknowledged the sacredness of the vessels by placing them in the house of his god. He did not play around with them even though he did not know the living God.

Mordecai was elevated by God, being taken from a prominent level to another elevated level. We rarely see people being blessed astonishingly because faith is rare among men. God has no limit to the heights He can take you. 2 Samuel 12:7-8 (AMP) – "[7] Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you as King over Israel, and I spared you from the hand of Saul. [8] I also gave you your master's house, and put your master's wives into your care and under your protection, and I gave you the house (royal dynasty) of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have given you much more!"

David was the King of Israel. He had great wealth. I wonder what God meant when He said; He would have given him more. This shows us how infinitely great and mighty God is. John 14:12 (KJV) – "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." One of Jesus's greatest miracles while on this earth was raising the dead. I wonder what other miracle can be greater than that. However, He says that if we believe in Him, we will do greater things than that. God is extremely good in that He wants mere mortals (you and I) to surpass his track record.

Esther 10:3 (KJV) – “For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.”

Mordecai was promoted by the King in that he was second to him. Through faith, Mordecai did all that he could with everything he had. He is an excellent example in the stewardship lesson. His life proves that if we live by faith and do all that we can with all we have, God will take us to levels that we did not expect. Just as Esther’s courage illuminated the palace halls, Mordecai’s faith casts a brilliant light on the path of his convictions. Mordecai’s faith was like a decree, as unyielding and resolute as King Xerxes’ command, shaping his destiny with unwavering belief.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me do all I can with all I have. Help me always to encourage others. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- List down everything you own
- Ask God to show you how to use each item for His glory effectively.
- List people who you think need encouragement, and prayerfully devise ways that you are going to encourage them.

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CHAPTER 59

THE FAITH OF JOB

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Job was the greatest of all the men of the East,

From greatness, Satan lowered him to be the very least,

Job's faith in God made Job to top God's list,

He was a genuine man of God, his faith got Satan pissed.

Satan took all that Job had and made him sick,

Even when his body was sick, his faith in God was never weak,

Job was never proud; he was ever meek,

Job never cursed God as his wife advised; he praised God seven days a week.

Adversity mounted on Job's life, but he accepted no defeat,

He bravely soldiered on, conquering his battles, he did not retreat,

He loved his neighbors and friends; with them, he did not compete,

His patience was admirable, with faith, in Job's shoes we will fit.

Job maintained his integrity like a steel beam in a skyscraper,

Amidst trials and troubles, he stood firm, a truth embracer,

Through the storms of life, he was a moral landscaper,

His deeds, like prayers, reached God, the Mighty Creator.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Picture Job's life like a wild rollercoaster ride in a dark tunnel. It was full of difficulties, just like his arduous journey. He faced tough times, like a brave adventurer exploring a super-duper deep and dark cave.

But guess what? Even in those super-duper tough times, Job found strength. It was like a superhero holding onto their cape during a strong storm. He talked to God and felt better, like when you talk to your best friend about what is bothering you.

Job hoped for better days, like a pirate dreaming of finding hidden treasure. He believed that things would get better, just like you believe the sun will come out after a rainy day. He trusted that God is fair.

Even when things got hard, Job stayed true to his beliefs, just like how you stick to what you think is right. His journey was like an exciting adventure story with ups and downs, like a detective solving a tricky mystery, but his firm belief made it even better.

Job 1:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. [2] And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. [3] His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East."

We are introduced to Job as a perfect, upright man who feared God and avoided evil. The Bible tells us of his great possessions and that he was the greatest of all the men in the East. It tells us of his ten children and the amount of material wealth he possessed.

Many Christians think that a genuine Christian is bound to suffer. We tend to believe that material wealth is meant for the people in the kingdom of darkness, and it has no place in the life of a converted Christian. This is not true.

God created wealth; it comes from God, and God owns it. Satan owns no wealth. The power which he exercises over the things of this world, he exercises it through permission from God. Therefore, joining a cult to gain wealth is foolish because the Devil has nothing to give.

Job obeyed God and treated the Lord with utmost reverence. He avoided sin, and as a result, God made him the greatest of all the men of the East. The secret to greatness is to live by faith. Hebrews 11:2 tells us that the elders obtained a good reputation by faith. A good reputation can only be obtained by faith.

Job 1:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. [5] And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Job feared God because he constantly took responsibility for other people's mistakes. He took responsibility for his children's sins. Therefore, he regularly made sacrifices to keep them in harmony with God. He was not always with his children to know what they did. However, he always felt the urgent need to intercede for them because he understood how deadly sin is. Parents should always intercede for their children. The enemy never rests. He is always seeking a moment to destroy your offspring.

Job did not just pray; he went the extra mile to offer sacrifices. People should go the extra mile beyond prayer to bless their children and families. They can do this through fasting, helping the afflicted, serving in church, etc. We are to keep watch over our children's spiritual lives, confessing their sins on their behalf even when we do not know the wrongs they have committed like Job did.

It is an act of faith to intercede for someone. If we pray for other people and go out of our way to help them, we will be helping them and helping ourselves, too. We shall get abundant peace of mind and infinite joy through blessing others.

Job 1:6-12 (KJV) – "[6] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. [7] And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. [8] And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast Thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? [9] Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? [10] Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. [11] But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. [12] And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."

God was so pleased with Job because of his faith. He even went ahead to tell Satan about Job. Being wicked and jealous, Satan accused God of favoring Job too much, giving Job a reason to be faithful to God. Satan does not want to believe that it is possible for someone to love God without expecting anything from Him.

The Devil told God that Job worships Him because He had blessed him with good health, a good family, and great wealth and has put His hand of protection over everything that Job has. God knew Job's heart because He is all-knowing.

The Lord knew Job would still worship Him even if He took everything he had. Therefore, He allowed Satan to afflict Job briefly to prove that there are faithful people in this sinful world (where almost everybody expects to receive without giving) who can love God wholeheartedly and worship Him without selfish interests.

Job 1:13-19 (KJV) – "[13] And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: [14] And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: [15] And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. [16] While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. [17] While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried

them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. [18] While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: [19] And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

God allowed Satan to take away all that Job had. Satan took away Job's animals, his servants, and his children. These events happened so rapidly that before one could finish reporting a tragedy to Job, another would come to report a different disaster.

While God's work is adding and multiplying what you already have, Satan's work is subtracting. The Devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). He takes away what we already have to make us lose hope in life and eventually lose trust in God. He thought he had won over Job when he took all he had. He was wrong.

Job 1:20-21 (KJ21) – "[20] Then Job arose, and rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshiped, [21] and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job did not lose his fidelity to God. Instead, he bowed down and worshipped Him after getting all that negative report. Satan was not satisfied. He thought Job retained his loyalty to God because he still had his health intact (Job 2:4-5). God allowed Satan to touch Job's health, and the Devil smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his head (Job 2:7). Job still maintained his integrity to God.

Job 2:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. [10] But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Job's wife gave him a suggestion to curse God and die. He refused. He chose to stick to God through thick and thin.

Job 9:32-33 (AMP) – "[32] For God is not a [mere] man, as I am, that I may answer Him, that we may go to court and judgment together. [33] There is no arbitrator between us, Who could lay his hand upon us both [would that there were]."

Even though God highly favored Job, he understood that God was not on his level. The closer you get to God, the more you understand how infinitely high He is. Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV) – "8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God is not a man (Numbers 23:19).

Job felt that he was not worthy of going before God. Therefore, he sought a mediator between him and God who could reconcile him with God. He treated God with great reverence. Few people in the world fear God. Therefore, many do not treat Him with the reverence that He deserves.

Some mock God and insult Him because they think He does not exist because they have never seen Him. We should not wait to be in a situation similar to Job's to recognize that there is a God in heaven. Job loved God before facing his affliction, and he still loved God even when Satan threw his sharp darts at him.

Job 13:15 (AMP) – "Even though He kills me; I will hope in Him."

Job chooses to trust in God even when God does not bless him. Many of us worship God and serve Him because we know He can bless us, and He has promised to bless us if we obey Him. We seek God not because of a genuine love for Him but because of the good things that He promises. Job loved God genuinely. He was going to trust God even if God caused him harm.

Job's love for God was not conditional, dependent upon earthly prosperity or good health. It was a love that transcended circumstance, grounded in an understanding that God's ways were far beyond his comprehension, as the book of Job makes evident. Even when God seemed to be causing him harm, Job's trust remained unwavering.

The story of Job challenges us to reflect on the nature of our faith. Are we pursuing God primarily for the material blessings He can bestow upon us, or are we ready to love and trust Him unconditionally, even when life's challenges seem insurmountable?

Job's example reminds us that authentic faith involves an enduring commitment to God, irrespective of our circumstances. It encourages us to trust that God's purposes may not always align with our immediate desires but ultimately lead to a deeper, more profound relationship with Him. This type of faith is a refuge in the most challenging moments of our lives, an anchor in the storm of uncertainty, and a testimony to the enduring power of love and trust in the Divine.

Job 19:25-27 (KJV) - "[25] For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: [26] And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: [27] Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

"Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earth-born children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences, we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills; and new faith, new life, would spring into being." – My Life Today, Page 328, Ellen G. White.

After all his animals have died, and all his children and he is in a critical health condition that seems that he is approaching death, Job still believes that his redeemer lives. He still has hope that God will turn around his situation for the better one day. He believes that problems will not last forever and one day all problems that we are facing on earth will end when Jesus comes back the second time.

Unlike most of us, the second coming of Jesus does not seem too far-fetched for him. His patience has developed to a level that he trusts in God's timing and is willing to wait on God for as long as he lives.

Besides Jesus, no man in the Bible is narrated to have the same patience as Job. Patience is a vital fruit of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, many Christians do not have it. We want quick results, and we give up so easily. We do not exercise patience in our human relations. Therefore, we end our friendships when the other person makes a mistake. Many have ended their marriages because of

a lack of patience. Some people have bypassed and despised stupendous opportunities due to impatience.

I once heard one of my professors at university narrating how he bought Apple's stocks. He said that after he bought them, the company's share price went down. Therefore, he ended up selling his stocks at a loss. He said it did not take long before the stocks rose to mind-blowing levels again. Lack of patience cost him a lot of money. In the Bible, Esau despised his birthright because of being impatient (Genesis 25).

Former Basketball player Magic Johnson said that when Nike Company was still new, they offered him a deal to be their brand ambassador in exchange for their stock because they did not have much money then. He refused and demanded instant cash instead. He was not patient enough to wait for the time it would take for the stocks to mature. He regrets that decision to this day because he has seen the leaps and bounds that Nike's stocks have made.

Job 37:23 (AMP) – "The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not do violence to [nor disregard] justice and abundant righteousness."

God is a just God. It is quite common to hear people saying that God is unfair. God is not unfair; He is a God of justice. We often accuse Him of injustice because we are limited in our view of things.

We do not know the cause and the back story of why some things have happened to some people the way they have. For example, the people surrounding Job knew Job as a faithful man of God, but they did not understand why he faced the problems he was facing. They did not know of Satan's meeting with God and that God would reward Job greatly in the latter end.

God's justice is an unshakable pillar of divine character, but our limited human perspective sometimes leads us to label it as unfair. In our finite understanding, we often question God's fairness, failing to grasp the intricate tapestry of His divine plan. We are like individuals peering at a single puzzle piece while unaware of the grand mosaic it contributes to.

The narrative of Job exemplifies this human tendency to misjudge God's justice. Job, known among his peers as a devout servant of God, appeared plunged into unfathomable suffering without

apparent cause or reason. The perplexed onlookers, like us, could not discern the underlying purpose.

Job's story teaches us that a profound backstory is often hidden from our view. The meeting between Satan and God, as detailed in the Book of Job, remains concealed from human eyes. It is a glimpse into the heavenly realms where God's divine wisdom and purposes unfold.

Job's tribulations were not punishments but part of a divine plan to demonstrate the depth of his faith and character. God's justice extended beyond immediate circumstances to a grander design that would ultimately vindicate Job and abundantly reward his unwavering faith.

Like Job's contemporaries, we frequently rush to judgments about God's fairness based on our limited understanding, but in reality, His justice surpasses our comprehension.

We must acknowledge that being omniscient, God considers the broader spectrum of eternity, an aspect far beyond our limited human perception. Even when life's circumstances appear unjust or harsh, we must trust God's overarching sense of justice.

Through the lens of faith and a deeper understanding of divine wisdom, we can genuinely appreciate the fairness inherent in God's actions. Job's journey reminds us that God's justice prevails, even when our immediate circumstances may suggest otherwise.

God deals with people differently. However, whatever way He chooses to deal with an individual is just and righteous. Some people may look good in our eyes and seem to be doing good things, but we do not know what they are doing behind the scenes. Therefore, when they face the consequences of their sinful actions, or God decides to punish them so they can change their ways, we accuse God of being unfair. God delights in mercy and exercises plenty of justice.

Job 42:2 (AMP) – "I know that You can do all things, And that no thought or purpose of Yours can be restrained."

Countless times, we often doubt the omnipotence of God. We sing songs that acknowledge and praise God for being all-powerful, but we do not honestly believe that all power rests in Him and with Him. We believe that God can do some things, but He cannot do all things.

Sometimes, we judge God based on our abilities and the abilities that we have seen in human beings. For instance, we may have an ailing patient with us whom we have taken to all the best

doctors in the world and have failed to cure them. Therefore, we think God cannot heal since the most educated worldly physicians have failed to heal. God's prowess begins where all combined human prowess ends.

Job 42:10 (KJV) – "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

"According to his faith, so was it unto Job. "When He hath tried me," he said, "I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10. So it came to pass. By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was. And "the Lord turned the captivity of Job: … also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before…. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." Job 42:10-12." – Education, Page 156.5, Ellen G. White.

"On the record of those who through self-abnegation have entered into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, stand—one in the Old Testament and one in the New—the names of Jonathan and of John the Baptist." – Education, Page 156.6, Ellen G. White.

"Jonathan, by birth heir to the throne, yet knowing himself set aside by the divine decree; to his rival the most tender and faithful of friends, shielding David's life at the peril of his own; steadfast at his father's side through the dark days of his declining power, and at his side falling at the last—the name of Jonathan is treasured in heaven, and it stands on earth a witness to the existence and the power of unselfish love." – Education, Page 157.1, Ellen G. White.

"John the Baptist, at his appearance as the Messiah's herald, stirred the nation. From place to place his steps were followed by vast throngs of people of every rank and station. But when the One came to whom he had borne witness, all was changed. The crowds followed Jesus, and John's work seemed fast closing. Yet there was no wavering of his faith. "He must increase," he said, "but I must decrease." John 3:30." – Education, Page 157.2, Ellen G. White.

While still deep in adversity, Job's faith in God enabled him to pray for his friends. This was someone who could give himself no reason to help another person because he was probably encountering more problems than everyone around him. His difficulties did not stop him. He believed that despite the misfortune that he was facing, he still had something to give. He had no money to give since he had lost all his wealth, but he could still pray for someone.

The Devil did not take away the ability to pray from him. Some people think they have nothing to give because they do not have money. Matthew 5:42 (KJV) – "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Jesus said we should not turn away anyone asking us for help. Jesus understood that we are not going to have money all the time. However, he gave us this instruction because he knows that we have something to give even if we do not have money.

Acts 3:6 (KJV) – "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Peter and John did not have money to give the lame man, but they had a far more precious gift than all the silver and gold he had been borrowing in his entire lifetime. Through the power of Christ, they prayed, and he got healed. None of us lacks something to give someone.

Job's story illustrates that faith is not only about celebrating God during times of blessing but also about remaining steadfast in trust and reverence during times of suffering and questioning. It is a story of unwavering faith in the midst of adversity.

The faith of Job is a beacon that shines brightly in the heart of adversity, teaching us that even in our questioning, we can discover answers in the whisper of faith. Job's story serves as a sanctuary of hope and a masterpiece of patience and resilience, illustrating that the path to wisdom often winds through the valleys of adversity.

Just as the phoenix rises from the ashes, so does Job emerge from his trials, reminding us that through unwavering faith, we can endure and find strength in suffering. His journey echoes that in our darkest moments, we can find the prelude to our brightest days. Job's unwavering trust in God's justice reminds us that faith is not passive but a powerful expression of hope, perseverance, and resilience.

Job's unwavering faith, reminiscent of passages such as Isaiah 40:31, allowed him to mount up with wings like eagles, renewing his strength even in the face of unimaginable adversity.

As Job praised God seven days a week, he kept the Sabbath principle of remembering God as the Creator. He embodied the commandment to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as seen

in Exodus 20:8-11. Job's life was a living testament to this sacred day of rest, for even in his darkest hours, he rested in the assurance of God's providence.

Just as Job faced trials, James 1:2-4 comes to mind, highlighting endurance through suffering. Job's story becomes an earthly embodiment of this concept, as he persevered and emerged from his trials more potent than before, bearing witness to the power of faith in James 1:12.

The Sabbath, a solemn day of rest, carries us through the valleys of life. In the heart of adversity, we, too, can find rest of the soul. As expressed in Psalm 46:10, we can be still and know that He is God. Job's journey mirrors this truth, revealing that faith is not merely a passive observance but an active expression of hope, resilience, and the promise that, like Job, we can rise from the ashes through faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

"Dear God, help us maintain our faith in You, even when life's challenges seem insurmountable. May we trust in Your wisdom and justice, knowing that, just as Job emerged from his trials stronger, we too can find strength in all situations. Teach us to have unwavering faith, to pray for others even in our adversity, and to believe in Your omnipotence, for we know that You can do all things. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Activity

Find a Quiet Moment: Whenever you have a brief moment of quiet, take the opportunity to reflect on your faith and resilience.

Close Your Eyes: Close your eyes to create a moment of inner focus.

Recall a Challenge: Think about a recent challenge or difficulty you have faced or are currently facing in your life and pray about it.

Think of other people's challenges: Think of the various challenges your friends or people you know are facing and pray about them.

Draw Inspiration from Job: In this short reflection, remind yourself of Job's story. Think about how he remained steadfast in his faith and resilience despite immense adversity.

Repeat an Affirmation: Say a short affirmation or prayer inspired by Job's example. For example, "I trust in God's plan. I trust that He has given me ability to endure challenges."

Open Your Eyes: When you are done, open your eyes, and continue with your day, carrying the inspiration and faith you've drawn from Job's story.

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CHAPTER 60

THE FAITH OF DAVID

As small as he was, David defeated Goliath, the great champion,

He trusted in God's power and not the power of a mighty weapon,

His ties to God were by faith, it needed no belt nor ribbon,

Faith in God made him establish a mighty and victorious kingdom.

David became king after Saul and united all twelve tribes,

Unity in God is key if we want to live successful lives,

Love is found when we unite with God, not marrying many wives,

For God's love cuts deep in our hearts, without using razors and knives.

David wrote many psalms of worship and praise to God,

He always asked God to forgive him to stay on track on the narrow road,

David was victorious not by trusting spears and sword,

A faithful life to God, makes you never to get bored.

David loved his enemies and showed kindness to them,

Tit for tat and an eye for an eye was not his chosen game,

Through the line of David, Jesus Christ came,

If we have faith in God, our lives will never be the same.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

The History of David

David was born from the genealogy of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22). Boaz, the husband of Ruth, was David's great grandfather. Boaz begot Obed, who begot Jesse, who begot David. According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Boaz means *fleetness*. The name Obed means *serving*. The name Jesse means *I possess*. The name David means *beloved*. David was from the tribe of Judah and Jesus was born from the genealogy of David.

1 Samuel 17:13 (KJV) - "And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah." Three of David's brothers are mentioned. Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah. Eliab means "my God is father." Abinadab means "my father is noble" or "my father is willing." Shammah means "astonishment."

David lived a life of faith ever since he was young until he died. As a human being, he made various mistakes, but he never gave up on God. Whenever he sunk, he would lean on the mighty hand of God to pull him from the depths of the sea of sin. We can learn various lessons from David and apply them in our lives today.

God wants us to be victorious and to never lose a battle like David that is why He wants us to lean on Him.

David Versus Goliath the Champion

Who was Goliath?

1 Samuel 17:4-7 (KJV) - "[4] And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. [5] And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. [6] And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. [7] And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him."

“For forty days the host of Israel had trembled before the haughty challenge of the Philistine giant. Their hearts failed within them as they looked upon his massive form, in height measuring six cubits and a span. Upon his head was a helmet of brass, he was clothed with a coat of mail that weighed five thousand shekels, and he had greaves of brass upon his legs. The coat was made of plates of brass that overlaid one another, like the scales of a fish, and they were so closely joined that no dart or arrow could possibly penetrate the armor. At his back, the giant bore a huge javelin, or lance, also of brass. “The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and one bearing a shield went before him.”” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 646.2, Ellen G. White.

Goliath was a giant whose height was six cubits and a span equivalent to. Goliath was a giant whose height was six cubits and a span equivalent to. The name Goliath is believed to be of uncertain origin, but it may derive from a root meaning "exile" or "splendor." It could signify someone of great prominence or strength, as Goliath was described as a giant and a fearsome warrior.

The name Gath means "winepress" in Hebrew, suggesting a place of agricultural productivity, particularly in winemaking. Gath was one of the five major cities of the Philistines. The Bible often mentions it as part of the Philistine territory.

Not only was Goliath a giant but he was also a champion. He had fought many battles and won. Those who fight will tell you that in fighting size does not really matter, it is the fighting skill that matters. Goliath was huge in size with tremendous fighting skills. In addition to his fighting skills, he had the best and the heaviest weapons. We can say that he had triple advantage. He was well prepared for war as he was well covered everywhere from his head to his toe.

In military prowess, Goliath was equivalent to the greatest army commander of the best army now. In these modern times, he could be the equivalent of the army commander of the American, Russian, or Israeli army. In business, Goliath is equivalent to the best businesses in the world worth trillions of dollars that have been there for years, have all the systems in place and that seem highly secure to invest in.

David against Goliath was like a small village shepherd boy against the commander of the American army. David versus Goliath can be compared to a startup with no capital and little

experience versus a multinational corporation that has been there for years with the best structures, the best policies, the best employees, the greatest number of customers and the highest amount of capital and revenue. David fighting Goliath was like a baby boy fighting a grown-up man. In the eyes of human beings, he stood no chance to win that battle.

Are there battles in your life that you feel you stand no chance to win? Romans 8:37 (KJV) - "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Through Christ, we have conquered all battles. If we truly believe this, the power of the Omnipotent One will work through us to give us victory over all mountains.

Genesis 18:14 (KJV) - "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" What is difficult to us is not difficult to God. Nothing is challenging to God. Sometimes God may allow certain circumstances to challenge us for what seems like an extended time period so that He can build our faith in Him. David's battle with Goliath was not meant to weaken him. It was meant to strengthen him and to make him believe that if God has enabled him to conquer that tough battle, he can surely make him conquer other subsequent battles.

1 Samuel 17:15 (KJV) - "But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem."

By faith, David did not neglect home duties. We often see home duties as less important. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see diligent people out there to make ends meet while neglecting to care for their homes. Our focus should not just be on the ‘big’ things, it should also be on the minor things. If we take care of the minor things, the big picture will be complete and more beautiful than we can imagine. David taking care of his father’s sheep did not make him a lesser person. While trusting in God, the activity came in handy to develop him as one of the greatest leaders in Israel, a man after God’s heart.

David did not stay for long in Saul’s palace. He had a choice to stay there and admire the majestic royal splendor that was in the palace. He had a choice to stay there and feel the good feeling that most of us would have when communing with a king. Instead, he left the palace to look after his father’s sheep. One of the major lessons he learnt while in the field was the lesson of responsibility as he had to ensure that no single sheep was lost.

Responsibility is a divine quality that leaders should have. Resources entrusted to them must be properly handled and managed. God desires that through His power, they should increase what they have been entrusted with. He desires that the ability and the faculties that each person has been blessed with should be dedicated to Him so that the person may bring forth much fruit (John 15:5).

“If you can’t do little things right, you will never do the big things right.” – Admiral William H. McRaven. In the book Make your bed, William McRaven emphasizes that if one wants to change the world, they should start by making their beds. When you make your bed in the morning after you have prayed before going to do other duties, it gives you a sense of accomplishment. You feel more competent and encouraged to accomplish bigger tasks. David was going to battle with Goliath. However, before that He had to ensure the minor duties like attending to his father’s sheep were properly done.

A common saying goes, “Charity begins at home.” The University of Texas at Austin has a famous quote that says, “What starts here changes the world. What starts here can be a new idea in the mind of a single student. What starts here can be a work of art that enriches lives or a discovery that saves them. What starts here can be a new way of doing things, a new perspective on a global challenge. What starts here changes the world.”

It is a noble practice if one attends to simple house chores before getting out of the house in the morning. For example, one can ensure that their room is neat, breakfast is prepared for the other family members and that the dishes are washed. Doing that keeps the mind clear and makes one focus on the tasks that lie ahead. If you fail to do that, you may hinder your productivity at work because while working you will keep on thinking of the tasks that are left undone. You will be wondering how you will be able to do them in the evening when you have gotten home feeling tired.

Genesis 2:1-2 (KJV) – “[1] Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. [2] And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.”

God rested on the Sabbath after He had completed all that He had to do. Diligence and accomplishing given tasks give you rest. Your mind will relax after it knows that there is nothing left undone.

It is an act of faith to do trivial things right. It is an act of faith to serve people at home before serving the public.

The Power of Rising up Early

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1 Samuel 17:20 (KJV) - "And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle."

David rose up early in the morning to fervently carry out his father Jesse's commands. He honored his earthly father as well as his heavenly father. He had respect for God and respect for his parents. Before going to the battlefield, he left the sheep with a keeper. Had he not risen early in the morning, he probably would not have had enough time to do all that.

Rising early in the morning makes one accomplish much more than he would have if he had woken up late. Your day will be immensely blessed when you wake up early in the morning to pray and study the Bible. Communicating with God as the first thing in the morning will make your day successful as you will be reliant on the Ultimate Guide who knows no failure.

"Front-loading my day (getting a whole bunch done in the morning) is my productivity secret." – Celeste Geadlee. In the quiet hours of the morning (between 3 am to 6 am) the majority of people are asleep. Therefore, there is quiet peace. One can use those hours and do some productive work. There will be minimal to no distractions, and it is a wonderful time to concentrate.

Lindsay Champion says, "I am always craving that dreamy creative energy I can only get when the rest of the world is asleep." Sometimes and often, waking up early can be difficult. You were dreaming your best dream which did not end, and you go back to sleep hoping that you can dream it again. Sometimes you miss the warmth of the bed. As Life Coach Robert Burale says, "The warmer the bed, the colder the future."

Ellen G. White said that one's first thought in the morning should be centered on God. One struggle that I have sometimes, and some people do, is not waking up early, it is getting out of bed. Many of us when we wake up the temptation to check on our phones cannot be avoided. Sometimes, we may lie to ourselves that we are only replying to one text. Unfortunately, we end up wasting so much time on our phones, time which we are supposed to give an account to our Master, the Creator of time.

David Saluted His Brethren

1 Samuel 17:22 (KJV) – “And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.”

David knew that he was going to fight the battle even if no one in Israel fought it. Nevertheless, he was not arrogant about it. He respected his older brothers and greeted them before engaging further with them. Question: How often do we greet our siblings from home? Some people treat outsiders like kings and their family members like trash.

Sometimes familiarity breeds contempt and we undervalue those whom we come from the same home with because we know them too much, their strengths and weaknesses. David saluted his brethren. Many siblings from the same home can go for years without talking to each other. They only meet at events, mostly funerals. It is an act of faith to greet our family members and socialize with them. It is an act of faith to greet other people as well.

God is Bigger than Your Problems

1 Samuel 17:23-24 (KJV) - "[23] And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them. [24] And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid."

Goliath is first addressed as a champion. The word champion is synonymous with the word conqueror. The word champion is used to describe Goliath. This means that Goliath was famously known to win battles. His record of winning battles and his physical stature caused the men of Israel to flee as they were frightened by him. They were frightened by Goliath probably because they were comparing themselves to him. When we compare ourselves to our challenges, we can get frightened the same way because we have no might over the turbulent problems that come against us. The same will happen when we compare ourselves to those who are doing better than us. Thus, doubt piles up in our hearts, leaving no room for faith to stay. However, when we compare our problems to Jesus who lives in us, we become more confident because God is bigger than everything, including the giant Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:25 (KJV) - "And the men of Israel said, have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

The man who would kill Goliath was promised tremendous gifts like great riches, the king’s daughter, and freedom to his father’s house. These gifts were offered because the task of killing Goliath seemed impossible. God wants us to trust in Him because He wants us to do the impossible. Surmounting impossibilities was not meant for people in the Bible times alone. It is also meant for us, that is why God wants us to have faith.

When faced with a challenging task that is beyond our skills and abilities, we should trust God to help us through it instead of cowering and avoiding the task. Turning impossibilities to possibilities should be the most ordinary task for any Christian because they rely on the power of the Mighty One who knows no impossibility.

The value of the reward of a task is often proportionate to the level of difficulty of performing that task. If a task is easy and can be done by everyone, do not expect to get paid much to do it. Expect to get paid for a skill that is rare and can barely be done by anyone. The king offered such a great price to the man who would defeat Goliath because defeating Goliath seemed so difficult and impossible to the majority of people in Israel.

Going by this particular verse, we can clearly see that a genuine Christian is bound to be rich and successful. Here is why. The man who would kill Goliath was not the man who trusted in his own strength and physical ability because Goliath was more enormous and stronger than all the other men. Therefore, anyone going to battle with him would need extra power. The only power that is given freely to people with an intention to make them succeed is God's power.

The king promised to give great gifts to the person who defeated the Philistine champion. The only person who would defeat the Philistine champion was the person who trusted in God and not in his own strength. Therefore, the king would give those gifts to the one who trusted in God. In other words, he would give those gifts to a genuine Christian.

Genesis 14:21 (KJV) – "And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."

The king of Sodom was willing to give great riches to Abram because he conquered them in battle. Abram had defeated five armies with only a few men by his side. Through faith in God, Abram did the impossible. The king of Sodom was willing to give him great riches because he had done the impossible. However, Abram refused, probably because he was content with what he already had.

Genesis 41:39-44 (KJV) – "[39] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: [40] Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. [41] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. [42] And Pharaoh took off

his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; [43] And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. [44] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

Pharaoh was convicted and he acknowledged that it was God who had given Joseph the interpretation of the dream. As a result of properly interpreting the dream and giving a sound solid solution to the problem that Egypt was going to face (the years of drought), Pharaoh took him from the dungeons of prison and gave him the highest position in Egypt after him. Nobody in the entire land of Egypt could interpret the king's dream, only Joseph could.

A genuine follower of Christ was the only one able to interpret Pharaoh's dream that troubled him. When Joseph committed his God given gift to do God's work and followed God's direction, it caused him to be elevated and to be given a position of authority. It caused him to gain riches as well. When you elevate God by having faith in Him, God elevates you and when God upgrades you nobody can degrade you. Joseph was not doing it for riches, he was doing it for the glory of God as he had always done in his entire life. God always pays and He pays in ways that no other man can pay. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith in God guarantees success. A genuine Christian is meant to be successful than everybody else because God can give them the ability to do what other people cannot.

When People Misunderstand You

1 Samuel 17:28 (KJV) - "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

Sometimes when pursuing the purpose that God has set for you, people especially unbelievers can misunderstand you. Unbelievers do not have to be necessarily atheists. Unbelievers can be people who regularly go to church but do not take enough time to study God’s Word. They do not create time to engage in a personal worship session with God. Sometimes, they can be actively

participating in church with top leadership positions in the church but are unaware how to effectively conduct their given responsibilities because they have not allowed the Word of God to do an active service in their hearts.

Some of these people, as in the case of David, can be your family members. Eliab, David's brother misunderstood David. Since David was his younger brother, he probably saw him as a little brother who was weaker than him, smaller in size than him and as he thought, less knowledgeable and experienced than him. What he did not know is that when one commits themselves fully to God, God fills in for their weakness, their expertise, their knowledge, their experience among other things. Faith in God goes beyond your limitations. Where your strength, capacity and effort end, the power of God begins.

Eliab's words did not alter David's mind from focusing on the main goal of defeating the Philistines. Normally, Satan uses various people to discourage you so that you can get distracted from moving forward because. This is because the enemy does not want you to get the treasure of victory that God has placed for you at the end. The Devil knows how good and loving God is and he knows that God has the best for everyone in store. That is why Satan will do all he can to make you not access what God has in store for you.

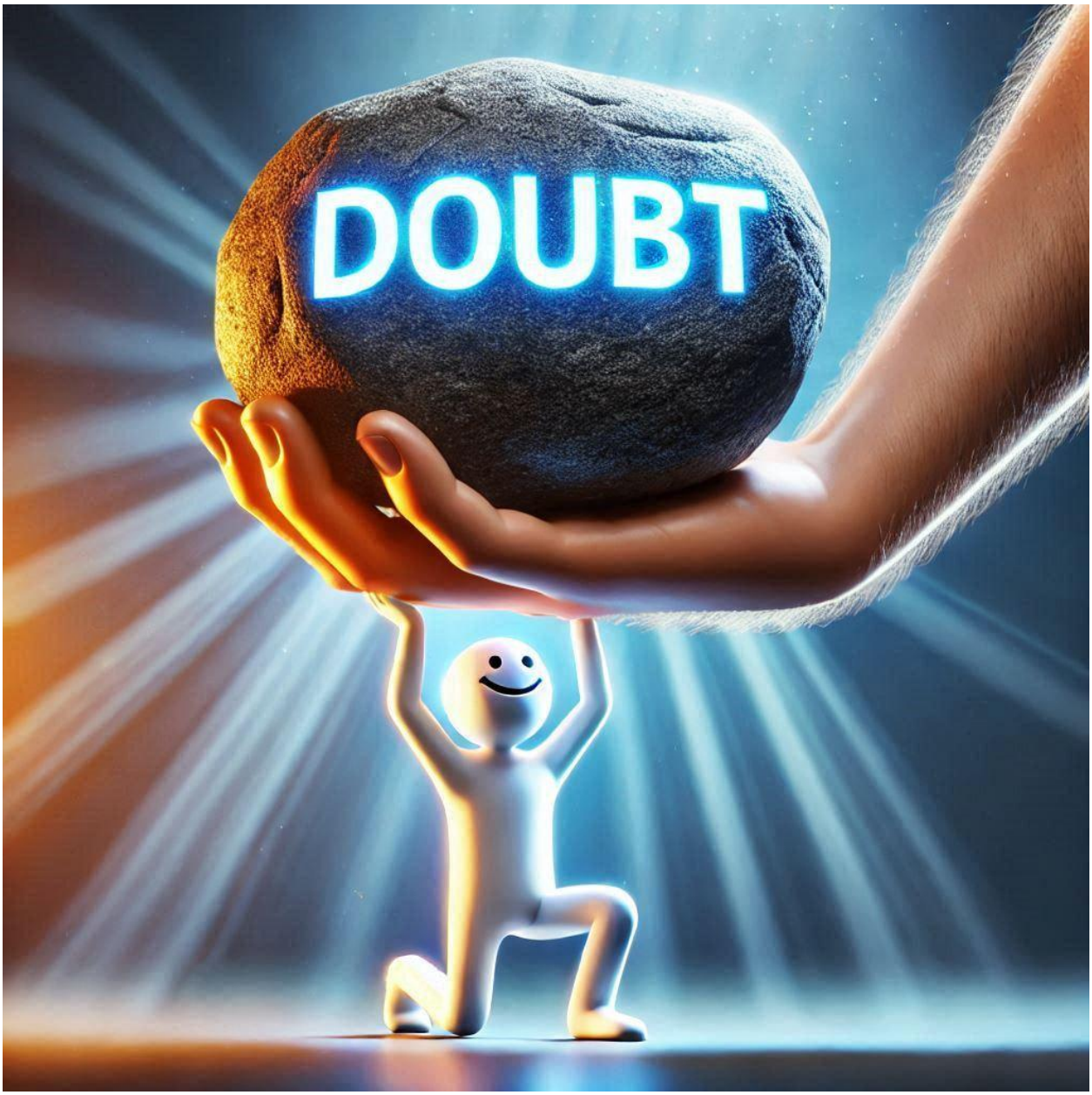
Matthew 16:21-23 (KJV) - "[21] From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. [22] Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. [23] But He turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Peter was not Satan, but he was being used by the Devil to deviate Jesus from His mission. Peter probably had the best intentions for Christ for he did not want to imagine his master dying. People being used by Satan to drive you astray do not always have bad intentions. Sometimes they have the best intentions for you, but their good intentions do not always align with God's will.

Your parents may discourage you from going to mission for Christ in a particular area because you do not have medical insurance cover, or the area is unsafe, and they do not want you to get harmed. Your friends may buy you expensive alcohol so that you can enjoy yourself and feel good. Peter

wanted the best for Jesus and Eliab probably wanted the best for David. However, the best from your best friends and your closest relatives is not better than what God has in store for you.

Yes You Can



1 Samuel 17:33 (KJV) - "And Saul said to David, thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

King Saul discouraged David from fighting Goliath, proving a possible defeat of David by citing Goliath's experience in war. Goliath might have had 20 years of experience in war, but he did not have more experience than God who reigns from everlasting to everlasting. King Saul was the king of Israel at that time. In other words, he was the highest person in the land of Israel while David was a young shepherd boy.

Normally, when a peasant is being given advice by a king or when someone not learned is being advised by someone who is highly educated, they are quick to follow every word that they are told. What many of us forget is that all human beings, no matter the level of their wealth, societal status, or education, are limited. Nobody knows everything, nobody has everything, nobody is all powerful, only God.

David seemed to understand more of the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence of God more than everybody else in the Jewish army. If you met David on the way and you were worrying where to get the next meal and he tells you that God is the provider, he would not be saying that as mere cliche words. Instead, those words would be coming from a heart that totally believes in them.

Do you know how many people say that God is the Creator, but they do not believe it? Many people loudly pronounce God's attributes that they have known through studies in school and in church. Very few proclaim them from a point of one's heart conviction. David did not take heed to Saul's words, instead he hearkened to God's Word because he fully believed in the powerful Words of Life. He knew Goliath was experienced but his God was more experienced.

David was told by Saul; he cannot go to war against the Philistine Giant. Do you know how many people give up because of being told they cannot? Do you know how many people look down on themselves after being told they cannot? David neither gave up nor looked down on himself for he did not put trust in himself, he trusted God. He was firmly convicted that nothing is impossible with God.

Former United States of America President Barack Hussein Obama has a famous slogan that says, "Yes we can." Excellence coach and mentor Joseph Obwanda has a quote that says, "Yes we must." Faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). With God, we have everything we need. No amount of evil should overcome us.

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Knowing The Results Before The Test

1 Samuel 17:34-36 (KJV) - "[34] And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: [35] And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. [36] Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

David first listened to Saul without interjecting him. After Saul had finished speaking, David proceeded to talk. He talked of his authentic experience as a shepherd. The work of a shepherd may be looked down upon by many, especially when one is telling it to a king. In business, it is often taught that if one wants to attract large corporations, they need to tell them about other large corporations with which they have worked. Drawing from this teaching, David needed to tell Saul of other battles that he had successfully fought.

Some businesspeople fake their portfolios to get clients. Some use fake reviews to attract more clients to them. Those tactics do not work. Evil may appear to succeed, but its success leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). When evil business tactics work and one gets to develop a relationship with a client, one may start feeling guilty of the lie that they told in the beginning. In case they do not work one may view it as a waste of sin and wonder why they did not tell the truth in the beginning.

David had never been on a battlefield but that does not mean he did not experience difficult challenges in the field as a shepherd. While he had never met Goliath before, he had met a bear and a lion and God had given him victory over those menacing, predacious, ferocious, and lethal animals. David believed that the God of yesterday is no different from the God of today. Therefore, he believed that the God who gave him past victories was able to give him present and future victories. If God caused him to defeat the lion and the bear, He would make him defeat Goliath.

The victory over the lion and the bear happened on two unique occasions. The battle that lay ahead against Goliath was only one battle. In other words, the challenges in the past were more in number than the one that was about to happen, and God had made him overcome them. They were two

against one. We forget too easily. If we remember the way that He has brought us through in the past and all the battles He has helped us to win, we will have no fear of any present or future challenge that is making a scary, mons-terrific face to us.

Students get scared of one exam, not remembering the numerous exams that God has made them to pass in the past. Sometimes when I look at the load of work that it might take to author my next Christian article, I fear. At that moment of fear, I do not remember the articles that I have written, edited, and published in the past are more than what I'm fearing to write. Sometimes, I get stage fright when going to speak, not remembering that I have successfully delivered talks in the past.

Sometimes, I get scared to embark on a software project, not remembering that the projects I have worked on in the past are more than the ones that are lying ahead. A scarecrow is meant to scare harmful birds, not human beings. Challenges and obstacles are meant to frighten unbelievers, not people who are made in the image and likeness of the Highest and only God. A righteous man should be afraid of nothing.

David knew that despite Goliath's magnanimous stature and successful record in battle, he could not win because he defied the armies of the living God. Being close to God is a powerful sign of victory. Staying far away from God and defying Him is beyond proof a sign of losing. Proverbs 4:19 (KJV) - "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." When you distance yourself from God, you will fail, and you will not understand why you are failing. The wicked know not at what they stumble because they are traveling on a dark path.

The Lord Delivers

1 Samuel 17:37 (KJV) - "David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."

A risk of getting severely scratched was what David had to face when going to save the sheep from the lion's and the bear's paw. Through Faith, David faced his fears. By Faith David took a deadly risk. Taking risks is an act of faith. The bigger the risk, the greater the returns. Do not expect much to come out of your life if you are the type of person who likes playing it safe, waiting for

everything to be perfect before you start. If you are the person who waits till you have figured out how everything is going to work out before embarking on something, you will never start or you will start too late when the returns won't be as great as they would have been if you had moved by faith earlier on.

As long as you are guided by God, risk taking has tremendous benefits. Those who invest in companies at the early stage take enormous risks because there is little to no proof that shows the company is going to profit. However, if it profits, they end up receiving ridiculously huge returns, sometimes twenty times the amount of money they had invested, other times a hundred times the amount or more.

The impact of going for mission in a place that previously had no Christianity is greater because the risk is higher compared to a place that already has Christianity. People fear the work it takes to convert such people; therefore, they resolve to minister to those who already have an idea of who Jesus Christ is.

A person from a different religion especially none of the Abrahamic religions, an atheist or someone who was a hard-hearted criminal, usually has greater impacting testimonies than those who were already Christians. Such people when they give their testimonies, more people get pulled to Christ compared to the ones who did not require much work to get convinced. God loves it when we take risks that are in line with His commands. Witnessing to non-Christians in an environment that is unfriendly to Christians is an enormous risk that is in line with God's Word.

Genesis 1:28 (KJV) - "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

God has given us dominion over everything on the land, air, and sea. He expects us to take diligent care of all living things, plants and animals. He has entrusted us with this environment and expects us to be faithful stewards to Him. Therefore, it was in accordance with God's will when David saved his father's sheep from the paws of the lion and the bear. God was with him when he took that risk. God was also with him when he took the risk to fight Goliath because Goliath had defied the armies of the living God.

David goes for Battle

1 Samuel 17:38-40 (KJV) - "[38] And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. [39] And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. [40] And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine."

“Though Saul had given David permission to accept Goliath's challenge, the king had small hope that David would be successful in his courageous undertaking. Command was given to clothe the youth in the king's own armor. The heavy helmet of brass was put upon his head, and the coat of mail was placed upon his body; the monarch's sword was at his side. Thus equipped, he started upon his errand, but erelong began to retrace his steps. The first thought in the minds of the anxious spectators was that David had decided not to risk his life in meeting an antagonist in so unequal an encounter. But this was far from the thought of the brave young man. When he returned to Saul he begged permission to lay aside the heavy armor, saying, “I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them.” He laid off the king's armor, and in its stead took only his staff in his hand, with his shepherd's scrip and a simple sling. Choosing five smooth stones out of the brook, he put them in his bag, and, with his sling in his hand, drew near to the Philistine. The giant strode boldly forward, expecting to meet the mightiest of the warriors of Israel. His armor-bearer walked before him, and he looked as if nothing could withstand him. As he came nearer to David he saw but a stripling, called a boy because of his youth. David's countenance was ruddy with health, and his well-knit form, unprotected by armor, was displayed to advantage; yet between its youthful outline and the massive proportions of the Philistine, there was a marked contrast.” = Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 646.4, Ellen G. White.

Saul gave David military armor to wear. David took it off because he was not comfortable enough in it. He knew that God was able to make him victorious without the proper military gear and weapons. As a small young boy, Saul's armor might have been too heavy for him, and he felt that he might lose the battle if he wore it. He resolved to don his simple shepherd gear, and the weapons he was accustomed to in fighting the battle.

Sometimes people may give you strategies of preaching and teaching to which you are not accustomed. Most times when you follow those strategies, they may fail to work because they are uncomfortable or unpleasant to you. You might be the type of person who preaches short sermons for ten to twenty minutes and someone advises you to preach for one hour so that your sermon can be more detailed. You try that and you end up losing more people because you are not used to it.

God has given everyone different interests and different abilities and we should learn to respect them. Some might be interested in preaching sermons with presentation slides while some presentation slides do not work for them. Some can preach sermons with Bible verses from memory like Pastor Randy Skeete, while others cannot. The most important thing in preaching is preaching the truth and not really the style of preaching. Some people will like your style of teaching while others will like someone else's style. God has different servants for a reason.

Some people are interested in expensive luxurious things while some are interested in simple modest things. God has created us differently with different interests for a reason. Some like vintage old cars, while some like new ones. Some like manual transmission vehicles while some like automatic transmission. Some like affluent, leafy suburban neighborhoods, while others like densely populated neighborhoods.

Conflict arises when we try to make people like us instead of letting them be who they want to be or who God has created them to be. The good thing about Saul is that he did not force David to put on his armor after David had refused it. I get various criticisms, for example how I hold my pen. I hold my pen in a way that many consider unique. Especially with elementary school teachers and students, many would tell me that was not the correct way of holding a pen.

According to me, the aim is to write, how the pen is held is not important. The objective for any driver is to drive to the required destination whether the driver uses a manual or an automatic transmission vehicle is not important. The aim of a graphic designer is to design a finished product, whether he uses Adobe software or simple Canva software is not important. The objective of any software, mobile application or website developer should be to develop a finished software, mobile app, or website, whether he uses no code tools or hard coding platforms is not important.

What needs to be done is more important than how it should be done. The goal is more important than the methods used. As long as the methods used are not breaking God's commandments, you

should proceed and do what you are supposed to do. Like David, we should go ahead to use the simplest means possible to achieve our goals. Hard work and complexity do not always guarantee success. I am not advocating for short cuts; I am advocating for doing things in the way you find most comfortable.

Someone may not be able to write like me, but he may be able to speak and through his speaking many people get converted. Someone may not be able to speak physically in front of a physical audience, but he can speak in front of a digital audience like TikTok, YouTube, Zoom or Google meetings platform.

While growing up I used to have a false belief that the more complex subjects you do in school the richer and more successful you will be. It is quite common to see students in high school and university fail in exams as a result of taking complex subjects that they don't like and don't easily understand because they believe that for one to be successful one must do what is complex and difficult. With simple tools that he was accustomed to, David proceeded to fight Goliath. He trusted not in the tools but in the all-powerful, perfect, and excellent God.

More Powerful Than All Battle Tools

1 Samuel 17:45 (KJV) – “Then said David to the Philistine, thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”

“There was a ring of fearlessness in his tone, a look of triumph and rejoicing upon his fair countenance. This speech, given in a clear, musical voice, rang out on the air, and was distinctly heard by the listening thousands marshaled for war. The anger of Goliath was roused to the very highest heat. In his rage he pushed up the helmet that protected his forehead and rushed forward to wreak vengeance upon his opponent. The son of Jesse was preparing for his foe. “And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in the forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.”” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 648.1, Ellen G. White.

A sword, spear and shield are powerful weapons particularly in ancient times, but God is more powerful than all past, present, and future weapons combined. David had weapons with him, he had a sling and a few stones. However, David did not praise the weapons he came with, instead He praised the name of God. He knew that earthly weapons stood no chance to win a battle against the omnipotent God. He knew that God was not by Goliath's side not because Goliath was a Philistine but because Goliath had defied God.

Some people assume that they are bound to be victorious just because they call themselves Christians. They feel that no matter what they do, they will still win because they call themselves after Christ's name. That is not true. God's blessings go to those who do His will whether Jew or Gentile. God gave the Israelites to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king (Daniel 1:1-2) because of their defiance of God's Word.

Galatians 6:7-8 (KJV) - "[7] Do not be deceived, God is not mocked [He will not allow Himself to be ridiculed, nor treated with contempt nor allow His precepts to be scornfully set aside]; for whatever a man sows, this and this only is what he will reap. [8] For the one who sows to his flesh [his sinful capacity, his worldliness, his disgraceful impulses] will reap from the flesh ruin and destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Goliath could not win because he mocked God. David praised God and trusted in God to make him win the battle.

An Easy Win

1 Samuel 17:48-50 (KJV) - "[48] And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. [49] And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. [50] So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David."

In ancient times a sword was like a gun or a bomb in this present age. It is not easy to find a soldier now going to fight a war without an offensive weapon such as a gun to counter the enemy. It is

also exceedingly rare for a soldier to agree to fight an entire army by himself. Goliath and the Philistines were expecting a substantial number of soldiers in the Israelite army to go fight them, prepared with the best weapons. When they saw David coming forward to battle them with no weapon or battle gear, they were probably reluctant and might have thought within themselves that they had already won that battle.

Before the war, the Philistines might have spent hours upon hours practicing for that war. On the other hand, David spent most of his time worshipping and obeying God, serving his family, and in the fields of nature taking care of God's creation. In the eyes of any normal 'logical' person who places little to no value on faith, David stood no chance to win since he was not as prepared as those who spent hours practicing how to fight. It is logical to say that a person who spends more time studying for exams and has no time to pray or worship God will do better in exams than the one who spares some time to worship God.

Psalm 127:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. [2] It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep

It is not God's will for you to spend sleepless nights pursuing the things of this world. God does not want you to fail to attend church service because you are busy preparing for exams. He does not want you to work sixty hours a week and fail to study your Bible and pray because you are looking for money to feed your family. God does not want you to fail to volunteer in a church program because you are preparing an important report at the workplace. God gives his beloved sleep.

Matthew 6:31-33 (KJV) – "[31] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. [33] But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In Matthew 6:32, the Gentiles represent unbelievers. Unbelievers are the ones who should worry about material things because they have placed their dependence on them. Believers should understand that even though we need material things, our dependence is not on them but on God

alone. Matthew 11:28 (KJV) – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” All who go to God are promised rest.

God gives His beloved sleep. Those who spare time to study God’s Word from the hours that they are meant to study for school will be accelerated in all knowledge and wisdom because they have sought the source of all true knowledge and wisdom. While having a conversation with 9-year-old Ethan, he told me, “You adults have so much to worry about, I have nothing to worry about.”

Most children care less about how they are going to get money for school fees, food, rent etc. They leave all those cares to their parents. Matthew 19:14 (KJV) - "But Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to people that are like little children. In other words, He meant that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who portray child-like faith, those who cast all their worries and cares to their Heavenly Father.

I read a story of an American man called Edgar Cayce (you can look him up and read his story too). Edgar Cayce was a devout Christian and Sunday school teacher who lived from 1877 to 1945. Edgar claimed to be speaking from his higher self while in a trance-like state. He would answer questions on various subjects such as healing, dreams, past lives, nutrition, and future events as he was sleeping. While he was sleeping, he could prescribe various cures for incurable and strange illnesses.

Cayce developed this ability after he was introduced to church when he was ten years old. For two years (from age ten to twelve), he read the Bible from cover to cover twelve times. While highly educated medical researchers spend years upon years trying to find cures for certain illnesses to no success, Cayce, who was not formally educated in the medical field, could find a cure for those illnesses while sleeping. If Edgar’s story is true and if he got those powers from God (since nothing is impossible with God) then that is straightforward evidence of God giving His beloved sleep.

A secular musician can spend hours researching the type of song to write. He can spend days trying to sing and produce a perfect song. He can spend a lot of money trying to market his music, looking for platforms to perform. Sometimes, they may succeed and other times, they may spend an entire lifetime trying with no success.

While the secular singer is spending a huge amount of time trying to produce a hit song, God may choose to give powerful songs to a gospel musician in a dream or during a Bible study session. Sometimes God does this because He does not want those who serve Him diligently to be ashamed. He knows that the world delights in mocking and ridiculing those who dedicate time to worship Him. Therefore, He does His best to ensure that those who spend time with Him are above only and not beneath. He does his best to ensure that the time they spent with Him is not wasted and they will not be a laughingstock as people expect them to be.

David's family, the Israelites and the Philistines might have thought that David was not well prepared as he was seen spending most of his time taking care of his father's sheep. They might have wondered how he would defeat Goliath, and he never set foot in a martial arts class while Goliath was an experienced warrior. He who spends time with God learns way more than the world suspects. Ellen G. White said (and I agree) that the Bible is more profitable than all earthly books combined.

If you were to depend on earthly books alone to make you successful, you would have to read very many of them. Secondly, not all concepts written in those books are true. Therefore, you will struggle a great deal with trial and error because you will experience failure that has come as a result of applying concepts that don't work. The Bible is not like that. If you follow everything that is written in the Bible to the latter, success will be your only choice. While reading other books, I come across some good powerful concepts which are explained in an overly complex manner that is incomprehensible to the normal reader. All those good concepts are in the Bible and are expressed in remarkably simple ways. God's education is easily accessible, affordable and it is the best education.

People of the world often look down on God's people and portray them to be less intellectual and less reasonable. Sometimes Christians are seen to be weak physically, mentally, and emotionally. People confuse humility with weakness. God has no weak point for He is the source of all strength. He is the Creator of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. He is a God who wants His people to reason as He bids them in Isaiah 1:18 (KJV) - "Come now, and let us reason together."

God created us in His image because He desires that we possess all these magnificent qualities that He possesses. He may take you through a humble training that may seem insignificant in the eyes of the world but in that training you end up acquiring lessons that even the most noble universities

have never taught. While David communes with God in the fields, he learned lessons and he experienced victories that probably nobody knew about.

God's education proved to be more than worthwhile when David prevailed over Goliath with a sling and a stone. It was a remarkable sight for everyone who saw that victory. They might have asked among themselves, "how did he do that?" God wants us all to live lives of constant spectacular victory. He wants unbelievers to ask among themselves, "how did he do that?" A life that has faith as its constant factor, is a life that has spectacular miracles as its constant results. The keyword is not miracles, the keyword is spectacular.

If the Israelites army had won Goliath with the proper military weapons and experienced battle men, it would have been a miracle. However, it would not have been a spectacular miracle. God wants to do things in your life that will compel people with the best optical vision to put on spectacles to confirm that what has just happened is real.

God wants you to rest should not be confused with God wants you to be lazy. God wants you to rest but He does not want you to be lazy. He wants you to work for Him and to do everything as if you are doing it for Him and not for fellow men (Colossians 3:23-24). When you labor for God and not for men, your labor will cease from being painful. It will be tireless. You will receive new strength and energy to do more than you usually do. When you commit everything to God and follow His direction you will be able to accomplish more in a lesser time when compared to those who trust in themselves and their own abilities. Your life will be well balanced.

David's life was well balanced. He did not fail to serve his family because he was busy preparing for war. Some of the world's richest men are divorced. I do not know the full details about their divorce, but it might be because they did not have time for their families as they were busy building their empires. God does not want that. God wants you to thrive in your finances and have family unity at the same time. When you give yourself to God, like David, He will show you how to balance all that.

Whose Son is This Youth?

1 Samuel 17:55 (KJV) - "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell."

"Saul strove to turn David from his purpose, but the young man was not to be moved. He replied in a simple, unassuming way, relating his experiences while guarding his father's flocks. And he said, “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.”” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 646.1, Ellen G. White.

Saul did not understand how the frightening battle had been won by someone whose family was not well known to him. Being a king, he expected to know every great and noble person in the land because kings usually have access to the best the land has to offer. Earthly kings can have the highest authoritative position in the land, but they are not omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. No king on earth knows everyone under their authority by name, age, personal problems and abilities among other factors.

God knows us more than we know ourselves, that is why He is the King of kings. Saul did not know David but God knew them both. God knows the people to connect you with and He will connect you at the right time He chooses to. God connected David with King Saul. Saul was amazed by the young lad David as he was able to do what no one in Israel had faith and courage to do.

Faith in God makes you do what cannot easily be done. Faith in God makes you special. Faith in God impresses everybody including kings and queens. Faith in God elevates. Faith in God makes you great. Faith in God turns imaginations, dreams, and fantasies into reality. Faith in God creates abundance where there was scarcity.

“It was the providence of God that had connected David with Saul. David's position at court would give him a knowledge of affairs, in preparation for his future greatness. It would enable him to gain the confidence of the nation. The vicissitudes and hardships which befell him, through the enmity of Saul, would lead him to feel his dependence upon God, and to put his whole trust in Him. And the friendship of Jonathan for David was also of God's providence, to preserve the life

of the future ruler of Israel. In all these things God was working out His gracious purposes, both for David and for the people of Israel." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 649.3, Ellen G. White.

Proverbs 22:29 (KJV) – "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

As a shepherd in the field where nobody was watching, David was diligent. Integrity is important as it defines who you truly are. Many of us do things to receive recognition from men. When dressing up for church, the first thing that comes to our minds is how certain people view us, not how God will view us. In social circles and in public we try our best to say what is politically correct and not what we genuinely believe.

Our sermons lack power because they are not backed up by a genuine conviction from the heart. These habits may protect our names but bring shame to God's name as many may wonder how comes our lives seem cursed and we are faithful children of God. Many have been driven out of religion because of such people. Someone may say, "Brother X is always faithful in church, but he is always poor and has more problems than everybody else." It is until we do a diligent background check and realize that Brother X is not as faithful as he portrays himself to be.

God was working on David and with David in secret, knowing that He will announce him at the right time. God saw David taking genuine care of his father's sheep as if they were his. He saw David taking loving care of sheep and knew that he would be able to take good care of men. He saw David risking his life to fight a bear and a lion and knew that if He gave him leadership, he would put other people's lives above his own. God saw it unfair for a great youth like David to be undercover and decided to pronounce him to the entire country before he pronounced him to the entire world and to future generations.

In whatever position God has given you, be diligent in it. Human beings may not recognize your efforts but God will always recognize them. Human beings judgement is typically based on what they see but God's judgment is based on truth. In the workplace, corruption and office politics can get you ahead for a short while but it will not sustain the little success that it has given you.

Cheating exams can give you good grades but cannot sustain a career where you will need the expertise to use those skills. Cheating in exams and assignments in school may put a good grade on your certificate that is not in line with the knowledge in your brain. Studying to merely gain

certificates may give you those certificates but will not give you the required skills. Not everybody who owns a driving license is a good driver and a certification of a certain skill is not full proof of the true retention of that skill. Cheating on your spouse may feel good for a brief time but it will eventually break the divine marriage relation and the blessings that come with it.

God wants to reward you openly that is why He is asking you to have integrity in public and in secret. Like David, Joseph, Esther, Mordecai and many others, God wants you to stand before kings. That is why the Lord is asking you to faithfully take a firm stand on Him as the solid rock. What you want for yourself is not good enough. God wants the best for you. By faith, make Him your first, last and best.

It is commonly believed among many people that for you to have a big name, your earthly father must be a renowned man with an equally big name. A prince is a prince because he is the son of the king and whether he is brilliant or not or diligent or not he is bound to be a prince. In some countries, especially those with monarchial systems, the position of king or queen is hereditary.

Some people believe that they have not been successful because they do not have a godfather. Some believe that they are not rich because they were not born in rich families. Some believe that because their parents are great musicians, actors, or leaders they will automatically turn out great. We may cheat earthly systems, but we cannot cheat God. One may rise to inherit the position of king and queen after the death of their parents but if God sees them unfit and unworthy for that position, they will not rule that land. David's father was unknown to Abner and Saul but that did not stop David from being great.

Saul asked Abner whose son David was because he did not know David's father. Abner too had no knowledge of Jesse and his family. Through God, David's name was great even though his father's name was not great. God created the world ex nihilo. He made it out of nothing. God can make you to be something out of nothing. He created man from the dust (that is, stepped upon) of the ground (Genesis 2:7). He can make you somebody and prove wrong those who think you are nobody.

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The Anointing of King David

2 Samuel 2:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] So it happened after this that David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" And He said, "To Hebron." [2] So David went up there [to Hebron] with his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel [in Judah]. [3] And David brought up his men who were with him, each one with his household; and they lived in the cities

of Hebron. [4] Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. Then they told David, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.”

David was anointed king in Hebron. Hebron means the seat of association. He probably had a feeling of going up into one of the cities of Judah (whereby Hebron is one of them) but was unsure whether to go there or not. Since he was a young man who yielded to God’s control, he did not pursue his desires immediately before asking God. God wants you to travel. God wants you to visit various places but at the right time. He may want you to visit San Francisco next month and visit Nairobi next year. God understands best why He wants you to visit a certain place at a particular time.

David asked God for permission to go up into one of the cities of Judah. He asked God to confirm his inner desire. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit can put the desire of certain things in our hearts and sometimes our selfish hearts can cause us to have certain desires. Sometimes the Holy Spirit can give us certain ideas, strategies, goals, and plans and sometimes our selfish souls can cause us to have those ideas, strategies, goals and plans. It is important when you set a goal, when you get an idea or when you get a desire to do something to ask God first before embarking on it.

Business experts will advise you to do market research for a certain product or service to see if what you want to sell is viable to the market. Market research is important but God’s approval over something is the most important. The market and the legal laws of various countries can approve an alcoholic or tobacco brand. But such an idea is not approved by God since God cannot approve products that are harmful to people’s mental and physical health. David did not ask anyone else whether he should or should not go to Hebron. He asked God.

Indecision can bring confusion. The more one delays before deciding, the more confused one becomes. Sometimes, you may delay or fail to make a certain decision only to realize later that there was something good that would have come out of the decision that you missed. Sometimes you may fail to make a particular decision only to thank yourself later after you realized that there was harm awaiting you in that choice. People struggle with making choices because they cannot differentiate between a good and a bad choice.

Some choices are easy to make and some are not. For example, when one is presented with a choice between attending a prayer night and going to a night club, a converted Christian will easily choose

to attend that prayer night. That is quite an easy decision to make. A converted Christian who has studied the Bible when presented with a choice to attend a church service in their host church or go preach in another church, will choose to go preach in that other church. This is because he has read that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). The difficulty in making such a decision can be considered midrange to most Christians as it is not so easy, neither is it ridiculously hard.

One can be presented with a choice to go and preach in Switzerland and get another opportunity to preach in Finland at the same time. Such a decision might be exceedingly difficult since both countries are in Europe, and both are well developed. Such a choice will need careful consideration and guidance from God. It will need one to diligently hearken to God's voice. David placed God's will above his. Therefore, he asked God if he should go up into the cities of Judah. God approved. He proceeded to ask God which specific city he should go to and God directed him to go to Hebron. By faith, David sought God's will and submitted to the Almighty's will.

After following God's direction of going to Hebron, David was anointed king. We are often reluctant to follow God's will because we think our will is better than God's will. Sometimes because of false interpretations of the Bible from various preachers, we think that God wants a low life for us. Some men may not seek God's will when looking for a wife because they think God wants them to have a wife who has good character but not good looks.

Eleazar sought God's will when finding a wife for Isaac and God directed him to a woman who had both character and beauty. Some people have been misinformed that God does not want them to have a lot of money. Therefore, they do not seek God's guidance about their financial lives. The standards you have set for your life are as high as your eyes can see and your mind can perceive. God's standard for your life is as high as heaven is from the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9). My experience with God has made me realize that God wants better for me than I want for myself.

Involve God in every decision that you make, including the ones that seem insignificant. If you do that, you will gain massive success more quickly because there will not be trial and error. Many people take a long time to be successful because they spend so much time on trial and error. Jonah wasted time in the fish's belly because he had gone in the opposite direction. If he had gone directly to Nineveh, he would have gained quick success.

The people building the tower of Babel wasted time building a tower in vain. If they had yielded to God's will and asked God to show them what He intended them to do, they would have achieved success in their endeavors sooner. If you introspect your life carefully, you will realize that it is sin which has caused most of your delays and stagnation if not all.

You Are Not Too Young

2 Samuel 5:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. [5] In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah."

Few presidents and kings in the world started ruling at the youthful age of thirty. Some make it to the presidency in their fifties, some in their sixties, seventies and eighties. David started ruling Judah when he was thirty years old. Jesus started His ministry when He was thirty years old. Joseph too became a ruler in Egypt when he was thirty years old. King Josiah in the Bible started ruling when he was younger than all these. He became king at the age of eight.

There is a common misunderstanding that a leader in any sphere must be old because old age equates to experience. The older you are, the more experienced you are perceived to be. When I volunteered to teach kindergarten class (3 to 5 year olds) class at the Camp Meeting of Syokimau Central Seventh Day Adventist Church we had such a discussion one day with some friends. The discussion was about whether it is correct to anoint young people as church elders. Among those friends was Pastor Geoffrey Kinyumu.

Pastor Geoffrey said, "Success in anything does not depend on the level of experience." While I was in university in my Computer Forensics and Investigation class, a guest was invited to speak to us. He had a company in the Cybersecurity and Digital Forensics field. He said, "Sometimes it is your inexperience that is needed to change the world."

Experience is a beautiful thing if it is well utilized. One purpose of experience is to enable one not to repeat the same mistakes that they once did. However, experience will not amount to much success if it is not evaluated. Leadership Coach and Author John C. Maxwell says, "Experience is not the best teacher but evaluated experience is the best teacher."

Some people have been doing the same thing over and over again for many years getting minimal to no results and they keep doing it because they have not taken time to evaluate their experience. It is more common than you think. Some have seen their grandparents and their parents ruin their families because of alcohol and they still indulge in alcohol. Sometimes, experience can make one proud.

Some people have no room for learning new things because they have experience. The pride that they possess makes them stagnate and fail in their lives. Some do not want to accept that they do

not know everything. So, they are not willing to be advised or pick a solution from a younger person no matter how sensible the proposed solution is. This leads to failure in the organization or jurisdiction that the person is leading.

We will be amazed how far we can go if we open our minds and hearts to collaborate and listen to the input of others. I was teaching a poem to the PowerPoint class (10-12 year olds) at the Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church. I was teaching them the words and the actions at the same time. Even though I was the one who had authored the poem, I wasn't able to get the actions for most of the lines.

At first, I did not want to ask the students to suggest the actions because I felt that I would lose my credibility as a teacher as I may look like I don't know what I'm doing and as a teacher, one needs to have all the answers. I thought within myself (through the guidance of the Holy Spirit) to lower my pride and ask them. I decided to ask them. I was amazed because they gave really wonderful suggestions. The actions stuck in their minds more because they were the ones who suggested them. When it was time to perform the poem, they gave a stellar performance. As a created being, you cannot have all the answers. It is a tremendous thing to be open enough to get help from other people.

When I started the internship mentoring program (which eventually led to some of the interns being the first employees) in my company Real Biz Digital, I used to conduct the communication via email. One hardworking and knowledgeable intern suggested that email communication is not the best mode of communication for an organization.

He suggested that we use an organizational communication application like Microsoft Teams and Slack. When we used these two, communication in the organization became easy and seamless. Now we have developed our own application which also acts as a project management software that is artificial intelligence driven called Anchor 360.

At first, I was hesitant to take a suggestion from him because he was younger and he was a subordinate but when I took it, his suggestion proved to be highly beneficial. God has created us in a way that nobody has everything. So, we need one another, rich and poor, educated, and uneducated, young and old.

Many people also believe that it is not possible, especially as a man to be successful at an early age. Numerous studies have been done and have shown that men seldom succeed before the age of forty. That might be the reason behind the common saying, "life begins at forty." Some people have commented and said that the reason that is the case is because men below forty years spend most of their time heavily indulging in alcohol, drugs, and immoral activities.

A certain YouTuber said that he was given a job as a managing director of a certain company when he was around thirty or thirty one years old. He said he spent most of his money and time drinking alcohol and having sex with various women. He said that when he lost his job is when he realized he should have invested the money and at least bought a piece of land, but he did not. This is common with many men.

Many men start engaging in alcoholism when they have finished college and have gotten a job. When they were in college they probably did not have the money to party and to maintain a significant other. Some of them were probably serious in church. After college is when they realize that there is a life full of 'fun' that they had been missing. As a result, many people have wasted their youthful vigorous years engaging in such habits.

A few who devoted their youthful years to honorable pursuits proved that it is possible to succeed when one is young.

John Davison Rockefeller Sr.

John Davison Rockefeller Sr., who lived from 1839 to 1937 is known to be the wealthiest American of all time and the richest person in modern history (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025)..

Rockefeller was a devoted Christian. He was born to a mother who was deeply religious and disciplined and had a major influence on him in religious matters. His mother would urge him to contribute his few coins to the church during church service.

In his business he exercised Christian principles. For example, “Right from the start, he believed that the path to success was to cut waste and produce the best at the lowest price (Folsom, 2010).”

“In 1885 John D. Rockefeller wrote one of his partners, "Let the good work go on. We must ever remember we are refining oil for the poor man and he must have it cheap and good." Or as he put

it to another partner: "Hope we can continue to hold out with the best illuminator in the world at the lowest price." Even after twenty years in the oil business, "the best. . .at the lowest price" was still Rockefeller's goal; his Standard Oil Company had already captured 90 percent of America's oil refining and had pushed the price down from 58 cents to eight cents a gallon. His well-groomed horses delivered blue barrels of oil throughout America's cities and were already symbols of excellence and efficiency. Consumers were not only choosing Standard Oil over that of his competitors; they were also preferring it to coal oil, whale oil, and electricity. Millions of Americans illuminated their homes with Standard Oil for one cent per hour; and in doing so, they made Rockefeller the wealthiest man in American history." – The Myth of the Robber Barons: A New Look at the Rise of Big Business in America, Burton W. Folsom Jr.

Rockefeller was trained from the beginning to work, to save and to give. He was extremely methodical and meticulous to details. Rockefeller saw a strong spiritual life as crucial to an effective business life. He tithed from his first paycheck and gave to his church, a foreign mission, and the poor. He sought Christians as business partners and later as employees (Folsom, 2010).

According to Rockefeller's documentary, a Baptist preacher once encouraged him to "make as much money as he could, and then give away as much as he could." According to the same documentary, Rockefeller recalled later in his life that it was at that time that the financial plan of his life was formed (Wikipedia contributors, 2025).

He used to read the Bible daily, attend prayer meetings twice a week and lead his own Bible study with his wife. Burton Folsom Jr. has noted, "[H]e sometimes gave tens of thousands of dollars to Christian groups, while, at the same time, he was trying to borrow over a million dollars to expand his business. His philosophy of giving was founded upon biblical principles (Wikipedia contributors, 2025).

His actions showed that he truly believed in the biblical principle found in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (NIV)"

John Davison Rockefeller started book keeping at the age of 16 and made several business partnerships beginning at age 20, concentrating his business on oil refining. God wants His faithful children to succeed at a young age.

Bill Gates

According to various sources such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, William Henry Gates III also known as Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft Company, has been mentioned at least fifteen times in Forbes Magazine as the world's richest man from 1995 to 2017.

He started coding software programs at the tender age of thirteen. He spent most of his time learning coding and started the Microsoft Company in 1975 when he was around twenty years old. He became a billionaire in 1986 when he was thirty one years old when his company Microsoft went public and since 1987 he has been included in the Forbes list of the world's billionaires.

One may admire him for attaining success at such a youthful age and some may think that success came easily to him because he succeeded when he was young. Unknown to them is while other teenagers were living and enjoying their teenage years, he was busy working. It is possible to succeed when you are young.

Alexander the Great

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Alexander the Great became King of Macedonia when he was twenty years old. This is an incredibly young age for one to be king. Alexander was taught by Aristotle when he was between the age of thirteen to sixteen, who inspired him with an interest in philosophy, medicine and scientific investigation. He began conquering territories from the age of sixteen and became king at the age of twenty.

When Alexander was thirty, he achieved a significant milestone in his military campaign, building one of the largest empires in history that stretched from Greece and Egypt in the west to Persia and parts of India in the east. He sacrificed pleasure in his younger years and as a result, he became successful at a youthful age. Unfortunately, he began indulging heavily in drinking and died at the age of thirty-three. It is possible to succeed when you are young.

Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg started learning computer programs when he was young. He started Facebook in 2004 when he was 20 years old. In 2007 at the age of twenty-three he was the world's youngest self-made billionaire at the time (Britannica, 2025). For several years he has been listed by Forbes in the top ten list of the richest people in the world. It is possible to reach the highest pinnacles of success when you are young.

Some people may debate and say that most of these well-known billionaires are not devoted Christians. They may not be professed Christians, and they may not even be believing in Christianity but some of the works that they do are supported by the Bible. For example, most of them engage in philanthropy. Helping the needy in society is a Biblical principle.

Zuckerberg created Facebook. One can use Facebook to evangelize and reach billions of people worldwide. I started posting Godly materials on Facebook before I opened my blog. Using technology to add value to people's lives is more effective and efficient compared to not using it. Therefore, someone who is taking his time, energy, and resources to produce a beneficial technological idea has blessed the world and in return he would be enriched.

Say not that you are a child

Jeremiah 1:7 (KJV) - "But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

God told Jeremiah not to say that he is too young. Many people have wasted their highly precious golden but fleeting youthful years through this dangerous statement. Many youths believe that they are too young to take life seriously. I have often heard young people saying that the years before thirty are meant for having fun and one should start taking life seriously when they are past the age of thirty. The people who say that assume that they will be alive when they reach thirty. God says, "Say not, I am a child."

You are not too young to be successful. You are not too young to achieve your dreams. You are not too young to live in your dream house. You are not too young to be a millionaire or a billionaire.

You are not too young to be the top most leader in your country. You are not too young to purchase your dream car. You are not too young to serve God. You are not too young to be what God wants you to be.

God did not tell Jeremiah that he (Jeremiah) was not a child. He told him not to say that he is a child. In Jeremiah's present situation when God was calling him, he was a child. God understood that Jeremiah was very young and there was a reason why God called him when he was still a child.

God knows the weaknesses you have. He knows all the current problems that you are facing. Therefore, like Jeremiah, He compels you to speak by faith. He urges you not to speak of your weaknesses and obstacles in your present situation but to do what He has called you to do.

If you want to succeed early, start early, put God first and be careful to listen and to obey everything He tells you to (Deuteronomy 28:1).

From Mockery to Majesty: David's Triumph over the Jebusites

2 Samuel 5:6-10 (AMP) - "[6] Now the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You shall not enter here, for the blind and the lame [even the weakest among us] will turn you away"; they thought, "David cannot come in here [because the walls are impenetrable]." [7] Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold (fortress) of Zion, that is, the City of David. [8] Then David said on that day, "Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him go up through the [underground] water shaft to strike the lame and the blind, who are detested by David's soul [because of their arrogance]." So [for that reason] they say, "The blind or the lame (Jebusites) shall not come into the [royal] house [of Israel]." [9] So David lived in the stronghold and called it the City of David. And he built all around [the surrounding area] from the Millo [fortification] and inward. [10] David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts (armies), was with him."

The Jebusites did not believe in God. Instead, they believed in their impenetrable walls. They thought that no human being could capture their fortress. They mocked David by telling him that

if he attempts to enter that city, he will be defeated even by the weakest people among them, the blind and the lame.

Matthew 5:11-12 (KJV) - "[11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

When you are a righteous man doing a righteous act and someone mocks you, insults you, falsely accuses you or does any evil thing to harm you, they are giving you blessings. The Greek word Makarios used for blessed in the beatitudes is the same word for happy, supremely blessed, fortunate and well off.

Makarios means happy. The one persecuting you is actively yet unknowingly contributing to your happiness when they are persecuting you. You may not be happy when they are doing it but their actions will bring happiness somewhere in your life in the future (future may be a few seconds going forth). Someone may lead you to an opportunity that you have been longing for in your life which in turn will make you happy through their persecution.

Makarios also means supremely blessed. When somebody comes and mocks you because of your Christianity, trying to make you feel less important, you should not lose confidence. You should be more bold because that circumstance has enabled you to be supremely blessed. The word supremely is used to attribute to the highest level of something. It can also mean excellently.

People who call you names or treat you with contempt because of going to church, talking about Jesus or any other form of Godliness have taken a leader and placed you at the highest point of that ladder, making it easier for you to access the highest point which you were longing to access. They have put you at the summit of the mountain you wanted to surmount. They have acted as elevators in your life and have taken you to the highest floor of your most desired building where there is the best view.

Makarios also means well off and fortunate. When someone sees you spending lots of time praying and studying the Bible and they belittle you for doing those activities, they have brought more fortune or luck to you. Persecution brings high level favor in the life of a Christian. It opens doors that were once tightly locked. This might be because when you persist to do right in the midst of

persecution, whatever you have done is considered more valuable compared to if you had done it in comfortable circumstances.

For example if you have free internet access, have the best food with you, have a computer and all tools to create content and edit, and have a peaceful environment, it is easy for you to evangelize digitally to people because the situation is favorable. God will surely bless you because you have used what He has given you how they are supposed to be used.

However, when one of these things are lacking it becomes challenging for you to evangelize effectively. The more things that you lack, the more difficult it is to efficiently conduct God's mission. Therefore, persist on your purpose even when strife and contention burns fervently from the unbelievers (people who don't believe and those who partially believe) around you. As a genuine Christian you will often find yourself being a sheep in the midst of wolves. Do not be frightened and do not lose hope for that is an opportunity to be blessed.

Sometimes you may do something good for someone, and they fail to appreciate it. Some may say thank you, but their words of gratitude do not come from the heart. They might have said them out of mere formality in an attempt to outwardly appear polite. Such people do not take much time before they get betrayed by their actions and you are able to realize that their words of appreciation were not honest.

Others will not even say thank you. Lack of appreciation either by words or thoughts or actions is a form of persecution. Do not stop doing good because people are not appreciating, take their ungratefulness as a motivational fire to do more acts of righteousness.

Some husbands will never appreciate their wives, no matter what they do. Some wives will go to great lengths to even research how to prepare the best meal. Some will still complain, and some will choose to keep quiet and not say thank you. Some wives will never tell their husbands thank you no matter the magnitude of the gift they receive from them. Some intentionally fail to appreciate it as a psychological tactic to make their husbands do more. Some might even pretend that they are angry or sad to emotionally trigger their husbands or boyfriends to give them bigger gifts.

I know some of you reading this are wondering how that works. A man who gives something to his wife and fails to get appreciated may be deceived to think that the gift they have given is too

small and they need to give something bigger. A person who does not appreciate small things will never appreciate big things. If your spouse does not appreciate you, you should thank God for making you supremely blessed and highly favored through that painful experience.

If you live longer, you will realize that God has blessed, you more than all who persecuted you. People who have gone through all this undeserved sorrowful and heart-breaking experiences while doing the right thing are the ones who enter big organizations to look for a job and they get the job immediately without anyone being interested to look at their resumes and academic papers. Such people are the ones who strike big deals seamlessly. This is because the persecution they went through brought them great favor. Therefore, as hard as it may seem, we need to gladly laugh out loud or even have a party whenever we face persecution. Persecution is like someone giving you a bag full of money, or precious stones or any other gift that you highly desire.

When the Jebusites persecuted David by mocking and discouraging him, they made it easier for him to capture Jerusalem. The majority of people think that persecution is a stumbling block, but it is actually a steppingstone. We think of it as a challenge meant to toughen things up, but it is actually meant to make things easier. David was a man after God's own heart. God had to come in handy and give him victory over his enemies. Their mockery of David probably triggered God to make the battle effortless.

Like most of us who get discouraged to walk the narrow path when others attempt to push us out of the way, David did not. By faith, David used his God-given wisdom to enter Zion, which he later called the City of David. He devised a plan to enter through the underground water tunnel. Some Bible scholars say it is the Bronze age vertical Warren's shaft that was used as a channel for water from Gihon Spring (fountain of the virgin). According to various sources it was the main source of water from the Pool of Siloam in Jebus.

Thus, the Jebusites deceived themselves by thinking that nobody could enter their city because it had high level security. What they did not know is that no system built by men is perfect. No matter how majestic and advanced the things we build seem to be, they cannot be without flaws. We are imperfect beings in an imperfect world with imperfect resources. We may combine with great and highly intellectual minds to produce an invention and think that we have built the best only to later realize that there are innumerable loopholes in our invention.

The Jebusites were probably expecting David and his troop to attempt climbing the high fortified walls. What they did not know is that God who is the way (John 14:6) has infinite ways to get where He wants to go, and He is willing to show us those ways. He tells us to follow Him (Matthew 16:24). God showed David the water tunnel way.

I am imagining the Jebusites sitting comfortably in their homes and their leaders dwelling delightfully in their castles or palaces, then suddenly they see David. The first question that would come to their minds is, "How did he get here?" That is how unbelievers (those who do not believe and those who partially believe in God) are going to be amazed when God blesses you. They are going to ask themselves, "How did he get here?"

The ones who are going to ask, "how did he/she get here?" are the ones who were probably higher than you in life and they did their best to block every opportunity that would cause you to advance in life. They will ask how you got to the level where they are as their wish was for you to remain in the pit that you are currently struggling to get out of.

When David defeated the Jebusites, some got killed and others were driven out of the city. Those who were driven out of the city probably went to a place that was worse or in better terms that was not as good as Jerusalem. I am imagining them when they are outside Jerusalem, pointing to it and asking within themselves concerning David, "How did he get there?"

A time will come if you remain faithful to God, worshiping Him and diligently serving Him that you will be ahead of the unbelieving ones that are currently ahead of you. Some of them thought they were unbeatable. The pride in their minds made them treat you harshly and cruelly. A time will come when they shall ask within themselves, "How did he/she get there?"

The Bible records in 2 Samuel 5:10 that David became greater and greater because the God of hosts was with him. When God is with you, you can only become better. You can only become greater and greater when you have the Greatest One as your companion. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of improvement and constant victory. God's greatness is infinite. Therefore, when you abide by Him, the great ever-fruitful vine, there is no limit to the amount of quality fruit you can bear. The staircase that God puts you on has no final step.

David’s House is Built

2 Samuel 5:11 (KJV) – “And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.”

The name "Hiram" is of Phoenician origin, meaning "brother of the exalted" or "my brother is exalted." In the Bible, Hiram is most notably associated with King Hiram of Tyre, who played a significant role in supporting King David of Israel.

King Hiram of Tyre holds significance in biblical history due to his alliance and friendly relations with King David and later with King Solomon, David's son. Tyre was a prominent Phoenician city-state known for its maritime trade and wealth, and King Hiram's support was instrumental in various construction projects, including the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 5:11 (KJV) mentions how King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar trees, carpenters, and masons, to aid in the construction of David's palace. This collaboration between Tyre and Israel reflects both political alliances and trade partnerships that were common in the ancient Near East. Overall, King Hiram's support and cooperation with King David and King Solomon contributed to the prosperity and stability of both kingdoms. It showcased the significance of diplomatic relations and international cooperation in biblical narratives.

Proverbs 21:1 (KJV) – “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will."

Everything is in God’s hands including the king’s heart. When you please God, He turns people’s hearts towards you. Building someone a house is a grand thing. King David did not build his own house. God used King Hiram of Tyre to build David a house.

When you honor God, God will work in the hearts of people to do for you things that you cannot do for yourself. God will also work in the hearts of people to do for you things that you can do for yourself but He doesn’t want you to do for yourself. When you sit down with an earthly ruler, chances are high that he will give you something as you leave. Now, let us answer this question, if carnal earthly rulers do that, how much more can God do for you when you spend time with Him?

The problem with us is that we want to spend time with everybody else except God. We go out there begging worldly people to be our mentors because we know the value that they can give to us. A few of them are open to be accessed but the majority of them cannot be easily accessed.

God is the one who created all those earthly mentors, and He has infinitely greater knowledge, understanding and wisdom than all of them. He has ideas that they do not have. He has resources that they do not possess. The best place to get mentorship from the Most High is the Bible. The more time we spend in the Bible, the better we will become.

If David had trusted in his effort to build a house for himself, it would have probably taken a longer time or more resources to build that house. His trust in God made God move in the heart of the King of Tyre to build him a house. God wants you to believe in Him because He wants to do for you things that you cannot do for yourself.

Names of David's Children

2 Samuel 5:14-16 (KJV) – "[14] And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, [15] Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, [16] And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet."

The above verse lists the sons of David that were born unto him in Jerusalem. First and foremost let us look at the meaning of Jerusalem for the purpose of establishing its significance. The name Jerusalem (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) means "Foundation of Peace" or "City of Peace." Sometimes Jerusalem is referred to as the city of David.

Jerusalem is often referred to as the "City of David" because it was King David who conquered the city and established it as the capital of the united Kingdom of Israel. David captured the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites, an ancient Canaanite tribe, around 1000 BCE. He then made it his capital and fortified it, expanding its boundaries. David's conquest of Jerusalem is recorded in 2 Samuel 5:6-10 and 1 Chronicles 11:4-9 in the Bible.

Under David's rule, Jerusalem became the political, religious, and cultural center of Israel. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and desired to build a permanent temple there, although this task was ultimately fulfilled by his son Solomon.

David's reign in Jerusalem established the city's significance in the history of Israel, and his legacy as its conqueror and builder earned it the title "City of David." Throughout the Bible, Jerusalem is often associated with David and his dynasty, cementing its connection to him in both historical and religious contexts.

2 Samuel 5:14-16 lists the sons of David that were born unto him in the city of peace (Jerusalem). The Bible lists a total of nineteen children born to King David (he might have had more but only nineteen are mentioned). However, out of these nineteen, eleven are listed in this particular context

that were born in Jerusalem. There is a reason things happen the way they happen. Rabbi Daniel Lapin writes that there are no accidents or coincidences.

We may attest to this when we evaluate our lives and find out that some of the things that have happened that seem to be by mistake were actually God's plan. There is a reason you were given the names you were given and why you were born in the place that you were born in. Since Jerusalem means the city of peace, it signifies that eleven sons of King David were born in a peaceful environment. In other words, a peaceful environment is productive. If you have peace of mind you are going to be highly productive. Matthew 5:9 (KJV) - "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Children of God are meant to be peaceful and to make peace where there is war.

The nineteen children of David mentioned in the Bible were:

1. Amnon - Son of David and Ahinoam (2 Samuel 3:2).

2. Daniel - Son of David and Abigail (1 Chronicles 3:1).

3. Absalom - Son of David and Maacah (2 Samuel 3:3).

4. Adonijah - Son of David and Haggith (2 Samuel 3:4).

5. Shephatiah - Son of David and Abital (1 Chronicles 3:3).

6. Ithream - Son of David and Eglah (2 Samuel 3:5).

7. Shimea (also called Shammua) - Son of David and Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5).

8. Shobab - Son of David and Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5).

9. Nathan - Son of David and Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5).

10. Solomon (also called Jedidiah) - Son of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:24).

11. Ibhar - Son of David and Eglah (1 Chronicles 3:6).

12. Elishua (also called Elishama) - Son of David and Eglah (1 Chronicles 3:6).

13. Eliphelet - Son of David and Maacah (1 Chronicles 3:6).

14. Nogah - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 3:7).

15. Nepheg - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 3:7).

16. Japhia - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 3:7).

17. Elishama - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 3:8).

18. Eliada (also called Beeliada) - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 3:8).

19. Eliphelet - Son of David and his wife (1 Chronicles 14:5).

The Children of David Born in Jerusalem

Shammuah (שַׁמּוּעַ) – Shammuah means "Heard" or "Obeyed." It is a name mentioned in the genealogy of David in 2 Samuel 5:14.

Shobab (שׁוֹבָב) – Shobab means "Returner" or "Returnee." It is the name of one of David's sons, mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:14.

Nathan (נָתָן) – Nathan means "Given" or "He gave." It is a name of Hebrew origin and is the name of several significant figures in the Bible, including the prophet Nathan who served during the time of King David.

Solomon (שְׁלֹמֹה) – Solomon means "Peace" or "Peaceful." Solomon was a king of Israel and the son of David known for his wisdom and the building of the First Temple in Jerusalem.

Ibhar (אִיבְחָר) – Ibhar means "Chosen" or "He chooses." Ibhar is mentioned as one of David's sons in 2 Samuel 5:15.

Elishua (אֱלִישׁוּעַ) – Elishua means "God is Salvation" or "God is my Salvation." It is the name of one of David's sons, mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:15.

Nepheg (נֶפֶג) – Nepheg means uncertain, possibly "Sprout" or "Bud." Nepheg is listed as one of David's sons in 2 Samuel 5:15.

Japhia (יָפִיעַ) – Japhia means "Shining" or "Bright." It is a name of Hebrew origin and appears in various contexts in the Old Testament.

Elishama (אֱלִישָׁמָע) – Elishama means "God has heard" or "God hears." It is a name of Hebrew origin and is mentioned as the name of several individuals in the Old Testament.

Eliada (אֶלְיָדָע) – Eliada means "God knows" or "Known by God." Eliada is mentioned as one of David's sons in 2 Samuel 5:16.

Eliphalet (אֱלִיפַלְאֵל) – Eiphalet means "God is Deliverance" or "God of Deliverance." It is a name of Hebrew origin and appears in the genealogy of David in 1 Chronicles 14:5.

Faith is the Victory

2 Samuel 5:17-19 (KJV) – "[17] But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. [18] The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. [19] And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand."

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The Valley of Rephaim, noted in 2 Samuel 5:18 (KJV), was a notable geographic expanse situated southwest of Jerusalem. In Hebrew, "Rephaim" translates to "giants" or "mighty ones," naming the valley after its ancient inhabitants, believed to be a tribe of giants.

The valley held significant strategic value owing to its location and landscape. Blessed with fertile soil, it proved ideal for agriculture and served as a pivotal route for both trade and military maneuvers. Its vast expanse also made it a preferred spot for armies to assemble and wage war.

In the narrative of 2 Samuel 5:17-19, we find the Philistines positioning themselves within the valley of Rephaim, spurred by news of King David's anointment over Israel. Faced with this looming threat, David turned to the Lord for guidance before engaging the Philistine forces, demonstrating his reliance on divine wisdom amid adversity.

When someone has gained a great victory for the first time, you will hear him attributing it to God but when victory becomes an ordinary event in his/her life, it does not take long before the person starts attributing it to his own efforts and mental prowess. Therefore, God becomes less and less valued. The person reduces the amount of time that he used to spend with God. If he used to pray five times a day, he minimizes it to once. During the week he spares no time for Bible study. It reaches a point that he has completely no time for God even on the Sabbath. As a result, that person begins engaging in sins that he had never imagined.

That is how a person subsides and all that was under their rule gradually degrades. We leave the high standards of God and start conforming to the low standards of the world. It is dangerous to be under the leadership of a person who sees no need of consulting God before he makes the smallest decision. We face a great threat when we are being led by people who think that success is a product of their own solutions and are not willing to seek solutions from God.

David had previously defeated the Philistines. Making another million is easy for a man who has already made a million. Winning a football game against a team is easy if you had previously won against that team. Doing a test for a certain course of study is easy if you have done it before.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that defeating the Philistines was supposed to be easy for David since he had defeated them before. Secondly, it was easier than before because he was no longer a young boy (like he was when fighting Goliath). Before, he had less moral support because people did not believe in him. Before he was a shepherd with no military equipment.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (KJV) - "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all."

We shall significantly reduce the time we waste when doing what we are not supposed to be doing because we will be doing exactly what God intended us to do. Many people have wasted twenty, thirty, fifty years or even more doing jobs that they were not meant to do, studying things that they were not supposed to, among other various things.

One reason we see little to no success in our diligent endeavors is because we are not doing what God has called us to. When God gives you an assignment, He makes providence for you. God Himself is responsible for making whatever He has told you to do a success. If you do exactly what the Lord has told you to in the manner that He has commanded you, victory will be your only option.

2 Samuel 5:20 (KJV) - "And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore, he called the name of that place Baalperazim."

David defeated the Philistines at Baalperazim. In Hebrew, the name Baalperazim means "Lord of the Breakthroughs" or "Lord of Breaches." After winning against the Philistines, he did not attribute the glory to himself. Instead, he gave God the glory and said, "The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters." When he said this he was probably remembering the promise that God gives us in Deuteronomy 28:7. Deuteronomy 28:7 (KJV) - says, "The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come up against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways."

The battle is between God and your enemies, not between you and your enemies. You have less power to make your enemies flee before you seven ways, but God has all the power to do that. The Bible tells us in Exodus 14:14 that the Lord shall fight for us. The Bible also tells us that the battle is the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47). David understood that it was God who gave him victory in the battle, and he was just an instrument that was used by God to accomplish that mission.

God will be pleased when we acknowledge Him as the giver of the victory we have obtained. If you have overcome an addiction, give God the glory. If you have been able to overcome a certain

ailment, give God the glory. If you have managed to overcome poverty, give God the glory. Give God the glory at all times even when things are not going the way you had envisioned. This is because victory does not lie in your visions and your plans, victory is reliant on God alone.

2 Samuel 5:21 (KJV) – "And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them."

David led his men to burn all the idols that were being worshipped in that land. David did not throw away the images. Instead, he burned them completely. Do away completely with all those things that are not adding value to your life. Doing that is like removing the trash can from the entrance of your front door, hence allowing you to swiftly move in and out of the premises.

One example can be spending time listening to secular music and watching movies that spread wickedness. You may be viewing it as a form of entertainment and saying to yourself that you cannot do those things that the media disseminates. However, when you evaluate yourself, you realize that you have spent so much time on them and have spent very little to no time doing something productive. Such things rob you of the time to read, listen and watch something productive.

If the youth would take the trash can of evil music, movies, series and scrolling on social media out of the front doors of their hearts, and allow Jesus to enter, they will be highly valuable and productive in society. When the limitless God begins working in them, He will make them to have influence that has no limits. The God who has no end wants us to have influence and greatness that has no end. So, like David, burn everything that is adding no value to your life.

When you are a leader, burn everything that is valueless to those whom you are leading. If you are leading a company or an organization, implement laws that honor God. At end of year parties and other ceremonies, do not buy alcohol and do not play music that adds no value to people.

2 Samuel 5:22-25 (KJV) – "[22] And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. [23] And when David enquired of the Lord, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. [24] And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. [25] And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer."

“God instructed David, saying, “Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.” If David, like Saul, had chosen his own way, success would not have attended him. But he did as the Lord had commanded, and he “smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.” 1 Chronicles 14:16, 17.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 704.2, Ellen G. White.

The word "Gazer" is believed to derive from a Hebrew root word meaning "strong" or "mighty." In biblical contexts, it refers to a city or region mentioned in the Old Testament, particularly in the books of Joshua, Judges, and 2 Samuel. Gazer was a significant city located in ancient Israel, known for its strategic importance and military significance. Gazer held strategic importance due to its location on major trade routes and its proximity to other significant cities. After its conquest by David, it became part of the territories controlled by Israel.

After David had defeated the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim, they came again and spread themselves in the same valley. The Devil will never get tired of attacking you. God might have enabled you to overcome a certain sin such as sexual sin or alcoholism. When God does this, Satan is not happy.

In the same way the Philistines came back to attack the Israelites in the valley of Rephaim, Satan will attempt to attack you in the areas that God has delivered you from. However, when he comes back, he will come back with stronger attacks. The Bible says that when a demon is driven out of a man, he goes back and comes back with seven demons stronger than himself (Matthew 12:43-45).

1 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV) - "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The Bible warns those who think that they are strong in the Lord and are unable to fall to take heed lest they fall. Some people might have witnessed this: after condemning someone for a certain sin, they end up doing the same sin. Some parents, after gossiping about other people’s teenage children’s bad behaviors, end up seeing their children with the same behaviors once they reach their teenage years.

While doing a self-evaluation, I realized that anytime I ever talked proudly about my progress and personal development and failed to acknowledge God, I ended up downgrading instead of upgrading. Anytime I felt that I had overcome a certain sin and talked proudly about it, I ended up sinking into the same sin.

David defeated the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim. It did not take long before the Philistines launched another attack in the same valley. David, in his wisdom, did not rely on his wisdom. The average person would have thought that it would be easy to defeat the Philistines in that valley the second time since they had been able to defeat them the first time. They would have used the same strategies to fight them that they had used before.

“The Bible has little to say in praise of men. Little space is given to recounting the virtues of even the best men who have ever lived. This silence is not without purpose; it is not without a lesson. All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God the glory of whatever they are or do belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands. More than this—as all the lessons of Bible history teach—it is a perilous thing to praise or exalt men; for if one comes to lose sight of his entire dependence on God, and to trust to his own strength, he is sure to fall. Man is contending with foes who are stronger than he. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.” Ephesians 6:12, margin. It is impossible for us in our own strength to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow. The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 717.1, Ellen G. White.

David asked God if he should go up. The first time, God had commanded him to go up but this time round, God told him not to go up. Despite his various records of victory, David humbled himself and asked God what He would want him to do. Success should never make us think that we do not need God’s advice anymore. In fact, when you are successful that is when you need God’s counsel the most. This is because you have a lot to lose.

The Philistines knew that David had defeated them in the valley of Rephaim, but they still attacked him in that same valley. They were not foolish to do that. They probably devised better strategies

and increased the number of their military men so that they could be victorious. They had probably conducted studies of that place and carefully evaluated what caused them to lose. They chose the valley of Rephaim probably because it was already familiar to them.

This scenario can be likened to someone who sits for the same test the second time. They are highly likely to get better grades than they did the first time because they have revised that paper and researched the correct answers. Therefore, they will probably do well than they did before.

This scenario can also be likened to a soccer team playing against the same soccer team in the same stadium that they did before. Losing the game for the first time probably made the losing team go back and evaluate why they lost. So, when they come to play the second time, do not be surprised to see them winning against the team that had beaten them before. The team which had won before may end up losing if they use the same strategies that they had previously used to win. However, they will be afraid to use different tactics because they have not proved them.

That is why we need God to be at the center of everything we do. That is why we need faith. God is the one who can give us the best strategies to deal with every situation that is presented to us. When we evaluate our failures, we will realize that we failed because we never asked God what to do and how to do it and if we asked Him, we never listened to the answers He gave us.

Like broken pencils, it is pointless to ask someone something and then close your ears when that person responds or walk away before that person responds. God always responds, it is us who do not listen. God always responds but will not always give you the answers that you want to hear. But He will always respond with the truth because He is the Truth (John 14:6).

God commanded David not to go up. Instead, He told him to circle behind them and come at them from the front of the mulberry trees (2 Samuel 5:23). God told David to act promptly when he hears the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees because God would have gone before them to strike the army of the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:24).

The strategies that God gave David were easy but sophisticated strategies. They were easy to the Israelites because God told them precisely what to do. They were sophisticated because their enemies could not predict those strategies as they were divinely communicated to David alone, who later on communicated them to his army. In their minds, the Philistines thought that they were attacking the Israelites, they did not know that they were fighting against the all-powerful God.

By faith, David obeyed God's commands without questioning. What were the results of David's obedience? The Bible records in 2 Samuel 5:25 that David defeated the Philistines from Geba to Gazer. In other words, the result of David's obedience was victory. The result of David's faith was success. Faith in God leads to victory. Faith in God leads to success. Faith is the victory. Faith is success.

The Center of Blessings

2 Samuel 6:12-19 (KJV) – "[12] And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. [13] And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. [14] And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. [15] So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. [16] And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. [17] And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. [18] And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. [19] And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house."

The name "Obededom," mentioned in 2 Samuel 6:12-19 (KJV), has Hebrew origins, and carries significance in biblical history. In Hebrew, "Obededom" is believed to mean "servant of Edom" or "servant of the red."

God had blessed the Obededom's house because he had stored the Ark of the Covenant in it. The Ark of the Covenant was used to store the law of God. Nothing was inside the ark except the Ten Commandments. So, we can say that having God's law inside Obededom's house blessed his house. This means that when we allow God's law to govern our homes, our homes will be blessed.

Critics who oppose the existence of God may oppose this fact. Some who may not have tried obeying God's Word fully may doubt that true obedience to God leads to blessings.

Those who may question the ancient story of Obededom need to hear the modern story of an American soldier called Desmond Doss. The 2016 movie, titled Hacksaw Ridge, was acted in honor of that American soldier. He was born in a Seventh Day Adventist home and in their house the Ten Commandments hung on the wall. Every day, he would look at those Ten Commandments and as time went by, they sunk deeper in him.

It reached a point during World War 2 that Desmond had to enroll in the military to defend his country. He joined the military but said that he would not kill because it was against God's commandments to kill. People ridiculed him and said that he would not be successful in the military if he does not kill. He stood his ground and said instead of killing, he would use his medical knowledge to treat those soldiers who are bruised in the war.

Desmond would carry his Bible every day to work and put it in his pocket. True to his word, he did not kill but he assisted in saving the lives of many. His fellow soldiers who had once mocked him realized that they could not go to war without him because of the great deal of help he had offered to them. He was obedient to God but courageous. He would risk his life and pass through the enemy's bullets to go and save lives.

At one point he was shot but he did not back down, he did not wait to heal, instead he continued with his work of saving lives. His acts of bravery and fidelity to God's law made his name great and made him receive numerous honors. How did he achieve all that? He achieved all that by having God's law govern his life. How did he know of God's law? He knew about God's law by seeing it hung on the wall at home.

When David was told how God had blessed the house of Obededom because of having God's Ark in his house, he went and took it from Obededom's house to the city of David so that God would bless the city as well. The Bible says in Romans 10:17 (KJV), "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

When David heard how God had blessed Obededom's house, he did not delay. Instead, he acted immediately by faith and brought that ark to the city. This deed which he performed showed wisdom. Once they discover the truth and the blessings that come with it, some people will still

not apply it. They will try to form 'intelligent' arguments around it while some would try to justify their wrongdoings. They will do everything else but obey it.

David brought the ark to the city and when he blessed it, he rejoiced and danced. He could not hold back his happiness. The law of God should make us rejoice. Each commandment is meant to make us joyful. For example, if you obey God’s commandments you will not feel guilty. Therefore, you will not experience the gloom that comes with the doom of guilt. We should all be exceedingly glad when we encounter the truth.

When you realize that Saturday (the seventh day) is the Sabbath, you should not feel sad and wonder how you are going to switch from keeping Monday as the Sabbath to Saturday. Instead, you should be glad and if it seems challenging to you, ask God to help you overcome that challenge. Once you read the Bible and realize that gossiping is bad, instead of feeling sad by wondering what stories you would be talking with your friends, relatives, or spouse, you should be excited. Do not worry, God will give you valuable and productive topics to discuss.

The name "Michal," which appears in 2 Samuel 6:16 (KJV), has Hebrew origins and carries significant biblical connotations. In Hebrew, "Michal" is believed to mean "who is like God" or "gift from God."

Michal was the daughter of King Saul and the first wife of King David. She is known for her role in the biblical narrative surrounding David's ascent to kingship and her reaction to his exuberant worship before the Lord.

In the passage mentioned, Michal observes David joyfully dancing and celebrating as the ark of the Lord is brought into the city of David. However, she despises him in her heart, possibly due to feelings of jealousy or embarrassment over his display of worship. Despite her royal status, Michal's attitude toward David's worshipful expression contrasts with his wholehearted devotion to God.

When Michal Saul’s daughter saw David leaping through a window and dancing for the Lord, she despised him in her heart. Some people will despise you when they see you showing commitment to God. The majority of those who will despise you will not tell it to your face. Instead, they will think thoughts of contempt towards you in their hearts. They will think that you are boring, foolish,

old-fashioned among many other bad things. They will despise you when you are worshipping God because they do not know God.

Saul's daughter might have heard about God because she was in the land of Israel. Those despising you when you are worshiping God might have heard about God but they don't know Him. Michal was a former princess. Therefore, she was royalty. She might have been physically beautiful too.

When you are a young man who is totally devoted to God, some ladies (not all) will want nothing to do with you. Especially on young people, Satan likes using the opposite sex to get one into sin. He knows that when one gets despised and wrongfully influenced by the opposite sex, they will easily fall into his traps compared to when one gets tempted by people of the same gender.

One lady in church told me, in her high school when a girl gets insulted by a boy it hurts more than when she gets insulted by a fellow girl. The Devil also likes using those who are of high status like Saul's daughter to despise you so that you can get easily discouraged. He likes using such because those are the ones who can exert the most influence in society as the majority of the people look up to them.

The Bible asserts that Michal saw David through a window. This means that she was not physically at the spot where David was worshiping. David was not locked up in his room or in a private place. He was worshiping God publicly. Nobody had stopped Michal from coming where David was and joining him in worshiping God. It was her own choice.

Some people will hate you for not making them same choice as them. Looking through a window means that there was an object (the window) blocking her from seeing the view clearly. She might have despised David because she did not have full clarity in her understanding the same way she lacked full clarity in her sight as she was looking through the window.

When the Spirit of God gets inside the heart of a person, God's Spirit deepens and broadens the understanding of that person. Therefore, that person begins doing things that an ordinary person who has not opened the doors of his heart for Jesus, does not understand. This will cause confusion to your enemies and they will be unable to predict your next move.

David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. In other words, he offered sacrifices. It would be a great act when you move by faith and sacrifice once you have come to

knowledge of the truth. You should be willing to lose your job once you know about the Sabbath and you are required to work on Sabbath.

I heard a testimony about a man in Eden Springs Seventh Day Adventist Church who when he heard Pastor Elizabeth Mokoro preaching about the Sabbath he decided to obey the commandment no matter the consequence. He went to his workplace and asked for permission to be leaving the workplace earlier on Friday afternoons so that he would go back home and prepare for the Sabbath.

The man was working at a top airline company and he had a senior management position there. His workplace refused to give him permission. So, he chose to resign. He had prepared himself that when such an event happens, he will downgrade his life. He had decided that he would move from the residential area he was living in to a cheaper area and he would move his children from the school they were in to a more affordable school. In no time, he received a job offer that was paying him double or triple the salary he was receiving. That job gave him extra benefits like paying for the school fees of his children in more expensive schools. That job also upgraded him from his residential area to a more luxurious suburb. God blesses us when we sacrifice for the truth.

David's Covenant with God

2 Samuel 7:8-16 (KJV) – "[8] Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: [9] And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. [10] Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore, as beforetime, [11] And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house. [12] And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. [14] I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: [15] But my mercy

shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. [16] And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever."

In these verses, God speaks to David through the prophet Nathan, affirming His covenant with David and promising to establish his lineage and kingdom forever. God recounts how He has blessed David, lifted him from humble beginnings, and made him a great ruler over Israel. God assures David that He will provide a place for His people Israel and promises to establish David's dynasty, ensuring that his descendants will reign on the throne forever. Despite the possibility of future transgressions by David's descendants, God vows to remain faithful and uphold His covenant with David's line, demonstrating His enduring mercy and grace.

God lists some of the things that He did for David (2 Samuel 7:8-9) and what He is planning to do for him. Some of the promises He gave to David were beyond his lifetime on this earth. God's blessings for you will overflow beyond your earthly lifetime. Therefore, David trusted that God would fulfill those promises even though he did not live long enough to see Him fulfill them. Those of us alive today can see that God is indeed faithful because He fulfilled the promises that he gave to King David.

What God had Previously Done for David

2 Samuel 7:8 (KJ21) - "Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel." We rarely see shepherds turning to kings. It is God alone who can transition someone like that. When Satan raises you like that, he is simply fattening you for the kill, like a farmer does to a cow.

When God transitions you, you can be sure that it is a genuine transition because He requires nothing from you. If you analyze clearly you will realize that the majority of people in this world are against your success and the Devil is against your success as well. That is why evil content is widely distributed and they try their best to submerge truth.

For example, I have been banned from WhatsApp (a social messenger application) three times because of spreading the Word of God (Truth). On most social media platforms, if you post anti-LGBTQ material you will be banned. Fairy tales have been distributed widely to kindergartens and elementary schools more than Bible stories. The most popular cartoons and video games are secular. The most popular music is secular music. Most popular mentors are secular and real gospel mentors are quite scant. Therefore, some Christians choose to have two or more mentors, one for spiritual matters and the other one for career matters.

The Bible covers all life facets. Therefore, a Christian mentor should strive to have knowledge in all these facets so that he may be able to mentor God's children accordingly. As we can see, in the world that we are living in, the forces that are against your success seem stronger. They are likely going to overpower you if you try to fight them with your own strength. Many have lost in that battle. However, when you have God by your side, you will undoubtedly be successful because His power is stronger than all other powers combined.

God was with David everywhere he went – Do you invite God to go with you everywhere you go? If we would invite God to go with us everywhere we go, we would not go to sin-filled places because God cannot mingle with sin. You cannot go to a night club or a whore house and say, "Please God go with me." Saying that will make you feel embarrassed. It is not easy to see people pray earnestly before they drink alcohol. Some may do that jokingly. If people would earnestly pray before they drink, the alcohol business will collapse because the Spirit of God will tell them not to drink.

When you invite God to participate in all your activities and to go with you everywhere, you will not go to some of the places you go to and do some of the things you do. This invitation will make God to go before you and block you from entering places that you are not supposed to enter. When you allow God to accompany you, He will lead you by His spirit to go to places where you will reap great benefits. One of those places that God will lead you to is the church.

The church may not seem to you as a very attractive place to be in but it is the best place you can be in this world. It is not something that can be fully explained. It is something that one needs to experience for themselves. Psalm 122:1 (KJV) reads, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Some people often bring this argument that they do not like going

to church because there are hypocrites in church. Your focus should not be on people. It should be on God.

When you walk with God, He will show you things that you had never seen. This is because He is the Creator of this world and He knows what is hidden in the most open places and what is hidden in the most hidden places. What you had once thought was common, God will show you its uncommon attributes/properties. Disguised opportunities will be uncovered by Him who clothes the flowers of the field in a beautiful and majestic array.

When a child walks with his earthly father, his earthly father gives him direction, showing him the pitfalls and the dangerous zones to avoid. Therefore, the child is quite protected from danger. Having understood that, we should also understand that there is a limit to what an earthly father or any other human being can see. There is no limit to what God can see. Therefore, when you walk with God, you will be more protected as you will be under the shadow of the almighty. When you walk with God you will be more blessed as He will lead you to the greenest pastures.

God cut off all the enemies from his sight – In the popular American sitcom, *Everybody Hates Chris*, the main actor Chris (Acted by Tyler James Williams) has a bully named Joey Caruso (Acted by Travis T. Flory). One day, while talking to the school principal, Chris tells the principal how Caruso makes his life in school difficult. Upon hearing this, the principal tells him, "Everywhere there is a Chris, there will always be a Caruso." Everywhere you go, there would be someone who loves you and someone who disturbs your peace. As Myron Golden often says, "Disruption follows intention."

When you are trying to do something that is beneficial to your life, you will always be distracted. When you start going to the gym and you are lifting small weights because you are a beginner, someone may start mocking you or laughing at you. When they see you lifting heavy weights and your body shape does not portray that, they will question your progress and make you feel like you are doing nothing. As a man, this may hurt your ego and make you fail to go to the gym again.

When you are at work, someone may bring a fascinating story about something that they have seen on social media which if you choose to look at, you may end up getting completely distracted and fail to finish your work. When you have chosen to fast and pray, that is the day your family decides to cook your favorite dish.

When you have decided to change your diet and avoid all unhealthy meals, that is when you get invited to parties and gatherings (some of them are family) and when they notice how unique your diet is, they start bringing all forms of opposition and arguments. In school, when the teacher is teaching in class, the person sitting next to you starts telling you fascinating stories, or someone else within the classroom starts making funny jokes.

When you start a business or choose to pursue your talent, someone may find a way to discourage you and you may end up being compelled to stop. When you go to church, someone may do something to you to discourage you which may stop you from attending church services.

All these are forces working against you to stop you from succeeding and will surely overpower you if you stay away from God. God dealt with all the enemies of David. In other words, He dealt with all his distractions and obstacles. As long as you are alive on this earth, Satan will never stop fighting you. Like Chris in the *Everybody Hates Chris* series, everywhere you go, there will always be a Caruso. Sometimes you may get exhausted in this battle and feel like you want to give up.

Here is the good news: God will take over more fervently when you get exhausted. The enemy will tire out before the Almighty tires out. Like David, if you have faith in Him, He will cut off all your enemies.

God made David's name great – Most people think that God does not want them to be great because God constantly advocates for humility.

Genesis 2:7 (KJV) - "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God used the dust of the ground to create a glorious being (human being) whom He made in His own image. God wants you to be great but humble.

Various texts in the Bible reveal that one of the most crucial ingredients to greatness is humility. This special concept cannot be easily fathomed by people who do not trust in God. From being an unknown shepherd, David's name was made great that it was widely known from his lifetime till now. The story of David has been read and has been told to people from various language groups. It is the desire of God for all his children to be great.

Do you know of a secular celebrity who has had his influence and popularity span over generations and a massive multitude of people as the Bible writers and the Bible characters have?

Things That God Promised David

God promised to appoint a place for Israel and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own – At the end of every month, after paying your rent, you feel a sense of relief. That is the same thing that happens when you pay your electricity bill, your water bill, your garbage bill, your security bill, your taxes, your Netflix subscription, and all other bills. Those who have a house that they have bought or built feel a huge sense of relief from these many bills since the house rent is usually larger than all these others.

Those who have dug a borehole or have solar panels for electricity in addition to the house that they own will feel more relieved. The ones who have bought stocks in the companies billing them will not only feel relieved but may also feel happy when they receive those bills.

Having said that, this can be a good investment strategy. Before you buy an iPhone, try buying some stocks from the apple company. Before you purchase a Netflix subscription, buy Netflix stocks. You can use this stock-buying strategy to buy stocks in all the companies that you consume products from so that when you buy their products you end up profiting instead of losing.

The good thing with this modern age when it comes to investing is that one does not need to have a lot of money to invest. Technology through the introduction of various web and mobile applications has made it simpler for one to invest very little money.

One such application is Revolut. Revolut can help you invest in various assets such as stocks, bonds, and cryptocurrencies within a click of a second. It is easy to use and has a friendly user interface and user experience. With Revolut, you can also enjoy virtual banking, very affordable insurance plans, fee-free global transfers, innovative budgeting tools, and exclusive cashback offers—all from one app designed to simplify your financial life. Sign up now: tps://revolut.com/referral/?referral-code=markalex92!NOV2-24-AR-H2

Thus, investing in the stocks of the companies you are purchasing products from is something worth taking into consideration. But do not focus so much on your earthly accumulated wealth that you have no time for God. Focus on Jesus and the heavenly treasures.

How does this investment strategy relate to the story of David?

God promised David that He will plant the Israelites so that they may dwell in their own place. The examples I used of the various bills not giving one a sense of relief relate to the feeling one gets when they don't have custody over something and they have to abide by the rules of the one who has custody over it. In essence, nobody owns anything because we did not create anything.

We are only custodians and managers of that which is in our possession. Usually, the one who shows great responsibility of taking good care of something he manages will have more added to him. That might be one of the reasons why the rich keep getting richer.

The best way one can show responsibility over something is handling that thing by God's commandments which will result in bringing more value to other people's lives. Why do you want more money? So that you can buy more alcohol for you and your friends? God might see this motive and look at your current habits and block you from accessing more money so that you don't destroy your life.

My friend Joseph, gave us a story of someone he knows who has become financially broke due to gambling. He told me the person told him that he is so addicted to gambling, the only thing that is stopping him from gambling is the lack of money at the moment. One of the prayer requests that this person makes might be for God to give him more money. If God gives him more money, He will be helping in destroying that person and God is there to give life not to destroy.

Luke 4:18 (KJV) - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,"

God wants to give people more freedom. God's Word aims to make people free (John 8:32). When the Israelites were not in their own place, they were not fully free. God promised them to give them their own place so that they can have more freedom. They were to use that freedom to worship Him more. When God gives you freedom, use it to worship him more.

When God moves you out of your parents' house, do not use that freedom to host parties and do evil things. Use that freedom to worship God. When God takes you out of prison, use that freedom to worship God. When God gives you more money, use that financial freedom to worship Him more.

John 14:1 (KJV) - "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

God does not want your heart to be troubled. He wants you to have a sigh of relief. God wanted the Israelites to be relieved. Therefore, He promised them a place of their own. In this modern times, God wants you to have your own business, have your own properties, have your own family etc. He wants you to be free from all that is stressing you.

The more you walk with God, the more freedom you will possess. Spending time with God is like unlocking the chains that are tying you up. Each moment spent devotedly in His arms unlocks each chain that has captivated you.

God promised to make them move no more – God promised the Israelites through the covenant that He had with David that He would give them a place of their own and make them move no more. In other words, God promised to make them more stable. It is God's will that you achieve stability in all areas of your life.

God does not want His children to be shaken. He wants you to achieve spiritual stability first because once you achieve spiritual stability all other areas of your life will be stable. This will cause your mind to be stable and once your mind is stable, your actions will be stable as well. Instability will cause problems in your spiritual life which will in turn cause havoc in your daily living.

The most stable place we will be is when Christ comes back for His saints the second time. One may buy property in this world then someone ends up stealing it or it ends up breaking or rusting. In heaven, there will be no thieves to break and steal and no moth or rust to corrupt (Matthew 6:19-20).

The more you pray, study the Bible, and share what you have studied with people, the more stable you will be. Habits that used to shake you previously will shake you no more. Your mind, character

and personality will have a solid-ground foundation that is stronger than the foundations that are carved in stone.

God promised to block the children of wickedness from afflicting them– Wicked people afflict us because we allow them to afflict us by being disobedient to God's Word. Not living a life that is fully devoted to God will bring curses and consequences in your life that will outwardly portray your unbelief in God. God desires us to be first and not last (Deuteronomy 28:13). He desires us to be above only and not beneath (Deuteronomy 28:13). Analyze the various areas of your life and ask yourself why a certain area of your life is not doing well and find out what God's Word says about it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Your life as a Christian should make non-believers – question their disbelief in God." Unfortunately, most Christians do not make non-believers question their unbelief. How can we say we believe in God and our personalities and habits do not show it?

How can we say we believe in God the possessor of earth while we are always begging and succumbing to the commands of unbelievers? For example, you profess to be a Sabbath keeper but when you are asked by your unbelieving boss to go to work on Sabbath you obey him because you are begging him to keep you at work.

Pastor Mark Finley spoke of a certain Christian who bought an entire university in Brazil to give a few students freedom to worship on Saturday. That is how a Christian should be. A Christian should not be under the oppression of an unbeliever because he/she is backed up by the power of the Almighty and one cannot oppress and suppress the power of God.

If you choose to do what you want instead of what God wants, God will allow you to live a life of oppression because he cannot force anyone to live a life of blessings. Sin will always result in oppression and scarcity. Obedience will always lead to freedom and abundance.

In heaven, there will be no sinners. Therefore, the wickedness perpetrated by the wicked people of this earth will have no room in heaven.

Through faith, David pleased God that God promised him to protect them from affliction from the wicked.

God promised to make them a house – Through His covenant with King David, God promised the Israelites to make them a house.

Let us look at the role of a house:

1. Shelter: A house shields its occupants from harmful elements such as relentless rain, swirling snowflakes, biting winds, or scorching sun. It stands as a bulwark against nature's fury and provides sanctuary from potential threats like prowling animals or unwanted intruders.

God will build you a house means that He will provide a shelter for you to protect you from all harm and danger. This does not necessarily mean that you will not encounter adversity because we are living in a world of sin. When you choose to live righteously, you will significantly reduce the amount of problems that you are likely to encounter.

Because the world is not perfect, one may encounter a few problems. However, when a genuinely devoted Christian faces problems, the problems will not weigh him down compared to when a sinner faces problems. It may seem absurd but there are some Christians who rejoice whenever they go through life challenges. The Word of God has worked in them so much to an extent that it will take a crazy amount of effort to harm them.

Acts 20:22-24 (KJV) - "[22] And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: [23] Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. [24] But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Paul knew that affliction was awaiting him in Jerusalem but it didn't move him. It did not stop him from spreading the gospel. Christ offers shelter that is stronger than any building on earth and firmer than all the mountains of the earth combined. The closer you move to Him, the stronger the shelter will be. We will find the ultimate shelter when we go to our glorious home when Christ comes back. In that glorious city of golden streets there will be no relentless rain, no swirling snowflakes, no biting winds, and no scorching sun. We will have the most desirable shelter.

2. Security: A house is a fortress of peace and tranquility. It is a haven of shelter where people reside to be warm and secure, shielded from the chaos of the outside world.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV) - "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is peace. God promises to give you peace that surpasses all understanding. Invite Him into your heart and He will build a house filled with peace for you. No form of war would overcome you because the shelter God offers is a shelter of peace.

No matter how advanced the system is, no human security is fully impenetrable. When God secures a place, He makes the place fully impenetrable.

Job 1:10 (AMP) - "Have You not put a hedge [of protection] around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands [and conferred prosperity and happiness upon him], and his possessions have increased in the land."

God had secured His servant Job that the most powerful evil being (Satan) could not access him. Satan had tried to access him to no success. Satan will try to access your heart using sin. He is looking for a very tiny, microscopic opening to enter. Once he finds it or once you pierce a hole for him by falling into temptation, he enters and enlarges that hole.

God's work is to ensure that there is no single opening for the Devil to enter. He wants to fill those holes that have already been made by the enemy. Not only does He want to fill them but He also wants to provide a hedge of protection around you. When God promised David a house, He was promising him a place of ultimate security. The mansions that Christ has prepared for us are highly secured. We should all aim to go there where there will not be evil and there will be no need to lock the houses.

3. Comfort: From the soothing hum of a heating system to the gentle whisper of air conditioning, houses are designed to cocoon their inhabitants in comfort. With insulation to ward off the chill, plumbing for creature comforts, and electricity to light up our lives, they ensure that our basic needs are met with ease.

The most comfortable place we can be is in the open arms of Jesus. The house that God promised David when he made a covenant with Him is a place of serene and restful comfort. God's embrace

is more comforting than a warm hug on a cold day. It is more restorative than being nestled in a bed filled with eiderdowns. It is more solacing than the familiar melody of a favorite song.

Matthew 5:4 (KJV) - "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

We mourn as a result of the affliction that we encounter in the world. Numerous times, the Israelites would mourn, especially when they were taken into captivity and displaced from their original land. Being taken to captivity came as a result of the sins they were doing. God promised to build them a home. A home is a place of comfort. Therefore, we can as well say that He comforted them.

Our sins have made us uncomfortable and God by His love wants to comfort us. The closer we move to Him, the more comfortable we will be. He is going to make us feel comfortable even in our toughest tribulations.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (KJV) - "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

When God comforts us, he expects us to comfort others. Through David He promised the Israelites that He would comfort them. He expected them to comfort people of other nations. Comforting an unbeliever who is facing tribulations may lead him to salvation.

Someone who is not facing tribulations may not listen to you when you go to tell them about Jesus, but someone who is broken-hearted has an opening in his/her heart for Jesus that has been formed by that brokenness. When they are broken they are seeking a solution and they are humble to receive people who seem to be offering solutions. When we meet such people we should count it a blessing because it will give us an opportunity to present to them the ultimate solution which is Jesus.

Psalm 23:4 (KJV): "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

From the days of David to this day, the rod and the staff are mainly used by shepherds to guide, support and rescue the sheep. They are used to lead the flock to follow the right path. God is our

shepherd. He uses his rod and his staff to lead us. Sometimes, when we go astray like the sheep, He may use the rod and the staff to correct us.

Not only does God's rod and staff guide, support and rescue us. God uses them to comfort us as well. He may comfort us through punishments whereby we may feel a little pain but the end result will be correction of our mistakes. The pain we will feel for a while will lead to comfort in the future. The future that Christ has promised us is longer than our current lives. So, we should allow Him to secure our future by all means.

God will always comfort us while we are on this earth. However, the most comfortable place we will be in is the home awaiting us on high.

4. Privacy: Within its walls, a house grants the precious gift of solitude. It is a retreat from the hustle and bustle. It is a space where individuals and families can unwind, rejuvenate, and engage in personal pursuits without fear of prying eyes or unwelcome interruptions.

When God promised the Israelites through David a home, He promised them a place of privacy. He promised them a place where they could enjoy rest without unwelcome interruptions and distractions. God is a God who respects privacy, which is why He gives us free will. When we choose to follow the broad wicked path, He will feel sad but He won't tamper with our foolish decision.

God wants you to spend private communion time with Him through prayer and Bible study so that He can give you special instructions that are specific to your life. Most of us, particularly young people, are often confused and do not know what to do. They do not know their purpose in life. Some do not know their gifts and talents.

Unfortunately, the majority of these people do not know what to do because they do not know what direction to take in finding themselves. They seek advice from everyone else except God. What troubles them is that the advice they have gotten does not satisfy them for they always feel like something is missing.

Mark 1:35 (KJV) - "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

Luke 6:12 (KJV) - "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

Matthew 14:23 (KJV) - "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."

In the above Bible verses we can see that Jesus treasured private time with God. Set a time and a place daily to spend with God. If you do that you will be on the winning side because it is a decision that you will relish.

5. Storage: A house is also a repository for our lives. It provides ample storage for our treasures, from cherished mementos to everyday essentials. It helps to maintain order and banish clutter from our living spaces.

God promised the Israelites to build them a house because He wanted to make room for them to store His blessings. Usually, when God blesses you, He makes room for the blessings before He gives you those blessings.

John 14:1-3 (KJV) -" [1] Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. [2] In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Jesus told His disciples that He is going to prepare a place for them. Sometimes, when God seems to have delayed to give you blessings, it is because He is preparing room for those blessings. The most essential room He begins to prepare is your heart to enable it to accommodate His rich treasures. He does that by decluttering your heart, removing every form of evil and every stain of sin so that the blessings He has in store for you will fit in.

We may build large mansions on earth but the best mansions will be the mansions that Jesus has prepared for us when He comes to take us home. They will be bigger and more beautiful than the best mansions that have ever been created by human beings.

6. Socialization: A house serves as a hub for human connection. It plays host to gatherings, shared moments, and celebrations, fostering bonds between family members, friends, and neighbors, and weaving the intricate fabric of community life.

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God wants us to socialize. He wants us to commune with one another because He understands the power of collaboration. He has given us different gifts and abilities so that we use them to enrich others and others in turn use theirs to enrich us.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) - "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Exodus 20:8-11 lays out the Sabbath as a vital social institution aimed at fostering communal rest, reflection, and reverence. By mandating a day dedicated to rest and worship, it underscores the significance of shared values, community cohesion, and spiritual renewal.

First and foremost, the Sabbath acts as a unifying bond within the community. It establishes a balanced rhythm of work and rest applicable to everyone, regardless of their social standing or occupation. From masters to servants, natives to strangers, all are called to honor the Sabbath, fostering equality and solidarity among society's members.

Moreover, the Sabbath prioritizes the collective well-being by emphasizing rest and rejuvenation. In a world where ceaseless labor can lead to exhaustion, the Sabbath offers a chance for individuals to recharge physically, mentally, and spiritually. By dedicating a day to rest, it promotes a healthier, more balanced lifestyle for individuals and the community at large.

Additionally, the Sabbath serves as a sacred time for reflection and spiritual growth. By commemorating God's creation and resting on the seventh day, individuals are encouraged to pause and ponder the divine order of the universe. Through prayer, worship, and the study of scripture, the Sabbath becomes an opportunity for individuals to deepen their relationship with God and fortify their faith.

In essence, the Sabbath commandment not only mandates the observance of the Sabbath as a religious duty but also highlights its role as a social institution. By adhering to the Sabbath, communities can cultivate a culture of rest, reflection, and reverence that enhances both individual lives and collective well-being.

The Sabbath commandment leads us to commune together and worship God in fellowship with one another. It offers a tremendous institution for socializing whereby even the animals we keep at home are commanded to rest together with us.

Psalm 133:1 - "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

When Christ comes back for us, He shall come to take us to our true home where we will enjoy communion with one another, fellowshipping together.

7. Expression of identity: More than mere bricks and mortar, a house is a reflection of its inhabitants' aspirations and personalities. It is a canvas for creativity, allowing us to imprint our unique stamp on the world through interior design, decor, and landscaping choices.

In essence, a house is more than just a structure. It is a place where we can carve out our own little corner of the world, surrounded by the warmth of family, the comfort of familiarity, and the security of belonging.

Our homes express who we are and who we are is expressed by our homes. Our homes serve as a canvas upon which we paint our identities. The way we decorate, organize, and maintain our living spaces reflects our tastes, preferences, values, and personalities. For example, someone who values simplicity and minimalism may have a home adorned with clean lines and neutral colors, while someone who is more eclectic and adventurous may opt for vibrant hues and eclectic decor. In this way, our homes visually communicate aspects of our inner selves to the outside world.

Our daily routines and habits are mirrored in our homes. The layout, amenities, and functionality of our living spaces are tailored to accommodate our lifestyles and needs. For instance, a home office may signify a commitment to work and productivity, while a cozy reading nook may indicate a love for literature and relaxation. Our homes adapt to support and facilitate the activities that define our lives, whether it is cooking family meals in the kitchen, hosting gatherings in the living room, or finding solitude in a personal sanctuary.

The way we care for our homes often reflects our emotional state and well-being. A tidy and well-maintained home may suggest a sense of stability, security, and contentment, while a neglected or chaotic environment may signal stress, disorganization, or unrest. Our homes become extensions of ourselves, absorbing and reflecting our emotions, moods, and experiences.

The beauty of heaven - Revelation 21:18-21 (KJV) - "And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

Just as our earthly homes reflect our identities, so does our heavenly home. Our earthly homes are not perfect because we are not perfect. Heaven will be perfect because we will be perfect. The majestic display that it will possess is a reflection of the majestic status that Christ has given us which will be fully seen in us when we get there. The twelve precious stones that lay the foundation of heaven that are extremely rare symbolize how precious we are in the sight of God. The city being made of pure gold like clear glass symbolizes the purity of our character when we get there. We will truly realize that the reward was worth waiting.

Therefore, the home that God promised the Israelites through David and by extension us as believers will be an expression of our true identity.

God's Promises to David's Seed

God promised David to set up his seed after him - When God tells David that He will "set up his seed" in 2 Samuel 7:12 (KJV), it refers to the establishment of David's lineage and the continuation of his family line. In this context, "seed" is a metaphorical term referring to David's descendants, particularly his immediate offspring and those who would succeed him as rulers of Israel.

God promises David that one of his descendants will succeed him as king and will build a house for God's name, indicating the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. This descendant, who is later identified as Solomon, will inherit David's kingdom and continue his legacy as a ruler over Israel.

The fulfillment of this promise extends beyond Solomon to include the establishment of a perpetual dynasty from David's line. Ultimately, this promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who is often referred to in the New Testament as the "Son of David." Through Jesus, who is a direct descendant of David, God establishes an eternal kingdom, fulfilling His covenant with David and bringing salvation to all humanity.

God promised David to establish the kingdom for his seed forever – God was pleased with David; therefore, He did not want his kingship to end with him. He wanted his kingship to be established in royalty for generations. Therefore, He promised to establish the kingdom for his seed.

The original Hebrew word for "establish" in 2 Samuel 7:12 is "קוּם" (qum), pronounced as "koom." This word conveys the idea of "to rise," "to stand," or "to arise." In the context of God's promise to David, it signifies the action of firmly establishing or confirming David's lineage and ensuring the continuity of his descendants, particularly in the context of kingship over Israel.

God promised David to establish the kingdom for his seed. In other words, He promised to make David’s kingdom stand. No human kingdom can stand because human beings are imperfect. The only kingdom that can stand is the kingdom that is established by God. God established David’s kingdom by making Jesus to come out of the lineage of David. Jesus being God is perfect. Thus, through Jesus, God established David’s kingdom. Not only did God establish David’s kingdom, but he also established his kingdom forever.

Philippians 2:9-10 (KJV) - "[9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." As a result of His humility, God gave Jesus a name which is above every name. Jesus is the King of kings.

1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) - "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The price of salvation is priceless. Most of us when we make huge sacrifices, we make them because we are expecting something in return. Christ did not expect anything in return from us

when He died on the cross. Instead, He died for us so that we can share in His royalty and riches. Through that Sacrifice, Christ made us kings and priests. He made us a royal priesthood.

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) - "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

God promised David that his seed shall build a house for God's name - 1 Chronicles 22:7-8 (KJV) – "[7] And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: [8] But the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight."

David wanted to build God a house. However, God refused him to do it stating that he had shed a lot of blood since he was a man of war. This should tell us how privileged we are when we are called upon to assist in contributing funds to the church for church projects and serving God. Serving God and contributing resources to the church is building God's house. David did not get that privilege but we enjoy that privilege. Therefore, when commissioned to assist in building the church we should not take it as a burden. Instead, we should take it as a privilege.

Even though God did not allow David to build Him a temple, His love did not allow the task and responsibility for David building Him a temple depart completely away from him. Therefore, God gave that responsibility to his son Solomon. Giving that responsibility to Solomon his seed was like giving it to David himself. Most parents usually feel the child's emotions more than the child.

For example, when a child is hungry and he or she complains to the parents, the parents feel the hunger more than the child. The same thing happens when a child is angry or happy. Majority of parents want their children to be successful. Some want their children to be more successful than them. Therefore, when David heard that Solomon his son was the one commissioned to build God's house, he was joyous.

God promised David that His mercy will not depart from his seed - 2 Samuel 7:14-15 (KJV) – "[14] I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the

rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. [15] But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee."

God promised David to have a father-son relationship with his seed. Because we are living in this world, we may not be fully perfect. However, God promised David that even though He corrects his seed for transgressing His law, He will not depart from them.

Hebrews 12:6 (KJV) - "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

God punishes those whom He loves. He punishes them so that they can stop the sin that is bringing curses in their lives. His aim is for them to live a righteous life that will bring blessings to themselves and to others. When God punishes us, His mercy does not depart from us. The punishments He gives us are as a result of his mercy.

Matthew 5:29-30 (KJV) - "[29] And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. [30] And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Jesus says, you would rather lose an eye or an arm or any part of your body that is causing you to sin now than to lose your whole body and soul in hell. We can apply that to this context by realizing that God would want to punish us now, even though we may feel a little pain than to have our entire lives end up in hell.

The Psalms of David

Out of the 150 Psalms written in the Bible, at least forty-nine of them are known to have been written by David. This huge contribution makes him to be the one who has contributed the highest number of Psalms in the Bible. His Psalms cover various topics and work out various purposes. However, they are all written for the glory of God.

These are the Psalms of David that are in the Bible:

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Psalm 3 - A Psalm of lament and trust in God during times of trouble.

Psalm 4 - A Psalm expressing trust in God and seeking His favor.

Psalm 7 - A Psalm of lament, seeking God's justice and protection against enemies.

Psalm 9 - A Psalm of thanksgiving and praise for God's righteous judgment.

Psalm 11 - A Psalm affirming trust in God's protection in times of trouble.

Psalm 15 - A Psalm about the qualities of those who dwell in God's presence.

Psalm 16 - A Psalm of trust in God's provision and delight in His presence.

Psalm 18 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's deliverance and victory.

Psalm 19 - A Psalm praising God's revelation in nature and His Word.

Psalm 20 - A Psalm of intercession for God's help and victory.

Psalm 21 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's blessings and victory.

Psalm 23 - Perhaps the most famous Psalm, expressing trust in God as the Good Shepherd.

Psalm 24 - A Psalm celebrating God's sovereignty and kingship.

Psalm 25 - A Psalm of trust in God's guidance and forgiveness.

Psalm 26 - A Psalm expressing confidence in God's righteousness.

Psalm 27 - A Psalm of trust in God's protection and salvation.

Psalm 28 - A Psalm of supplication for God's help and salvation.

Psalm 30 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's deliverance from affliction.

Psalm 31 - A Psalm of trust in God's steadfast love and refuge.

Psalm 32 - A Psalm of confession and forgiveness.

Psalm 34 - A Psalm of praise for God's goodness and deliverance.

Psalm 35 - A Psalm of lament and prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 36 - A Psalm describing the wickedness of humanity contrasted with God's steadfast love.

Psalm 37 - A Psalm of wisdom, encouraging trust in God and righteousness.

Psalm 38 - A Psalm of lament over personal sin and illness, seeking God's mercy.

Psalm 51 - A famous Psalm of repentance after David's sin with Bathsheba.

Psalm 52 - A Psalm contrasting the righteousness of the godly with the wickedness of the unrighteous.

Psalm 54 - A Psalm of prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 56 - A Psalm expressing trust in God's protection in times of fear.

Psalm 57 - A Psalm of trust and praise in the midst of danger.

Psalm 59 - A Psalm of supplication for deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 60 - A Psalm of lament over national defeat, seeking God's restoration.

Psalm 63 - A Psalm of longing for God's presence and praise in the wilderness.

Psalm 64 - A Psalm of prayer for deliverance from enemies and the wicked.

Psalm 101 - A Psalm expressing David's commitment to righteousness and justice as a king.

Psalm 103 - A Psalm of praise for God's mercy, forgiveness, and steadfast love.

Psalm 108 - A Psalm combining elements of Psalms 57 and 60, praising God's steadfastness.

Psalm 109 - A Psalm of lament and imprecation against enemies.

Psalm 110 - A Messianic Psalm about the exaltation of the Messiah as both king and priest.

Psalm 122 - A Psalm of joy and praise for Jerusalem, the city of God.

Psalm 124 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 131 - A Psalm expressing humility and trust in God's care.

Psalm 133 - A Psalm celebrating unity among God's people.

Psalm 138 - A Psalm of thanksgiving and praise for God's faithfulness and deliverance.

Psalm 139 - A Psalm celebrating God's omniscience and omnipresence.

Psalm 141 - A Psalm of supplication for God's guidance and protection.

Psalm 142 - A Psalm of lament and prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 143 - A Psalm of supplication for God's mercy and guidance.

Psalm 144 - A Psalm of praise for God's deliverance and blessings.

Life Situations and Applications of the Psalms of David

Listed below are some of the situations that you can apply the Psalms of David:

Psalm 3 - A Psalm of lament and trust in God during times of trouble.

Situation: Feeling overwhelmed by adversity, personal conflicts, or crises.

Application: Use this Psalm to find solace and express trust in God's protection and deliverance.

Psalm 4 - A Psalm expressing trust in God and seeking His favor.

Situation: Seeking peace and reassurance during stressful times.

Application: Read this Psalm in the evening or when struggling to find peace, seeking God's presence and favor.

Psalm 7 - A Psalm of lament, seeking God's justice and protection against enemies.

Situation: Facing false accusations, injustice, or persecution.

Application: Pray this Psalm when seeking God's justice and protection from adversaries.

Psalm 9 - A Psalm of thanksgiving and praise for God's righteous judgment.

Situation: Reflecting on God's past faithfulness and justice.

Application: Use this Psalm to praise God for His righteous judgments and past deliverances.

Psalm 11 - A Psalm affirming trust in God's protection in times of trouble.

Situation: Feeling vulnerable or unsafe due to external threats.

Application: Recite this Psalm to affirm trust in God's protective care during turbulent times.

Psalm 15 - A Psalm about the qualities of those who dwell in God's presence.

Situation: Striving for integrity and righteousness.

Application: Reflect on this Psalm to understand and cultivate the qualities that please God and ensure His presence.

Psalm 16 - A Psalm of trust in God's provision and delight in His presence.

Situation: Seeking assurance of God's provision and presence.

Application: Use this Psalm to express trust in God's continual provision and to find joy in His presence.

Psalm 18 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's deliverance and victory.

Situation: Celebrating a significant victory or deliverance.

Application: Read this Psalm in thanksgiving after experiencing God's help and deliverance.

Psalm 19 - A Psalm praising God's revelation in nature and His Word.

Situation: Meditating on God's creation and His laws.

Application: Use this Psalm to praise God for the beauty of creation and the perfection of His Word.

Psalm 20 - A Psalm of intercession for God's help and victory.

Situation: Praying for someone in need of divine assistance or success.

Application: Recite this Psalm as a prayer of intercession for God's help in others' endeavors or battles.

Psalm 21 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's blessings and victory.

Situation: Acknowledging God's blessings and triumphs.

Application: Use this Psalm to thank God for blessings, victories, and answered prayers.

Psalm 23 - Expressing trust in God as the Good Shepherd.

Situation: Seeking comfort and assurance of God's guidance and care.

Application: Recite this Psalm during times of stress, uncertainty, or grief to find comfort in God's shepherd-like care.

Psalm 24 - Celebrating God's sovereignty and kingship.

Situation: Recognizing God's authority and preparing for worship.

Application: Use this Psalm in worship settings or when contemplating God's majesty and authority over all creation.

Psalm 25 - A Psalm of trust in God's guidance and forgiveness.

Situation: Seeking guidance and forgiveness for past mistakes.

Application: Pray this Psalm when needing direction and reassurance of God's mercy.

Psalm 26 - Expressing confidence in God's righteousness.

Situation: Facing false accusations or needing to affirm one's integrity.

Application: Use this Psalm to declare your personal integrity and trust in God's righteous judgment.

Psalm 27 - A Psalm of trust in God's protection and salvation.

Situation: Feeling fear or insecurity.

Application: Recite this Psalm to bolster confidence in God's protection and salvation.

Psalm 28 - A Psalm of supplication for God's help and salvation.

Situation: Desperately needing God's intervention.

Application: Pray this Psalm when in urgent need of God's help and salvation.

Psalm 30 - A Psalm of thanksgiving for God's deliverance from affliction.

Situation: Recovering from illness or personal crisis.

Application: Use this Psalm to thank God for healing, deliverance, and restoration.

Psalm 31 - A Psalm of trust in God's steadfast love and refuge.

Situation: Seeking refuge and assurance in God's love during hard times.

Application: Pray this Psalm when needing to trust in God's steadfast love and protection.

Psalm 32 - A Psalm of confession and forgiveness.

Situation: Feeling guilt and seeking forgiveness for sins.

Application: Use this Psalm in confession to seek and celebrate God's forgiveness.

Psalm 34 - A Psalm of praise for God's goodness and deliverance.

Situation: Reflecting on God's goodness after deliverance.

Application: Recite this Psalm to praise God for His goodness and deliverance from trouble.

Psalm 35 - A Psalm of lament and prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Situation: Facing opposition or feeling attacked by others.

Application: Pray this Psalm when seeking God's deliverance from adversaries.

Psalm 36 - Describing the wickedness of humanity contrasted with God's steadfast love.

Situation: Observing the prevalence of wickedness in the world.

Application: Reflect on this Psalm to remember God's steadfast love despite human wickedness.

Psalm 37 - Encouraging trust in God and righteousness.

Situation: Feeling frustrated by the prosperity of the wicked.

Application: Use this Psalm to encourage trust in God's justice and the importance of righteousness.

Psalm 38 - Lament over personal sin and illness, seeking God's mercy.

Situation: Experiencing personal illness and guilt over sin.

Application: Pray this Psalm when seeking God's mercy and healing for sin-related suffering.

Psalm 51 - Repentance after sin.

Situation: Feeling deep remorse for a serious sin.

Application: Use this Psalm for heartfelt repentance and seeking God's forgiveness, especially after major failures.

Psalm 52 - Contrasting the righteousness of the godly with the wickedness of the unrighteous.

Situation: Dealing with malicious people or observing evil deeds.

Application: Reflect on this Psalm to affirm trust in God's justice and the eventual downfall of the wicked.

Psalm 54 - Prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Situation: Feeling betrayed or pursued by enemies.

Application: Pray this Psalm when needing God's deliverance from adversaries or betrayal.

Psalm 56 - Expressing trust in God's protection in times of fear.

Situation: Experiencing fear and seeking reassurance.

Application: Recite this Psalm to find trust and confidence in God's protection during fearful times.

Psalm 57 - Trust and praise in the midst of danger.

Situation: Facing dangerous situations or overwhelming odds.

Application: Use this Psalm to express trust and praise to God even when in danger.

Psalm 59 - Supplication for deliverance from enemies.

Situation: Feeling surrounded by hostile forces.

Application: Pray this Psalm when seeking God's deliverance from hostile situations or people.

Psalm 60 - Lament over national defeat, seeking God's restoration.

Situation: Experiencing national or communal crisis and defeat.

Application: Use this Psalm to lament collective failures and seek God's restoration and help.

Psalm 63 - Longing for God's presence and praise in the wilderness.

Situation: Feeling distant from God or spiritually dry.

Application: Recite this Psalm to express longing for God's presence and to rekindle spiritual fervor.

Psalm 64 - Prayer for deliverance from enemies and the wicked.

Situation: Encountering slander or covert attacks.

Application: Pray this Psalm when seeking God's protection from hidden dangers and enemies.

Psalm 101 - Commitment to righteousness and justice as a king.

Situation: Aspiring to or holding a leadership role.

Application: Reflect on this Psalm and commit to personal and communal righteousness and justice.

Psalm 103 - Praise for God's mercy, forgiveness, and steadfast love.

Situation: Celebrating God's forgiveness and lovingkindness.

Application: Use this Psalm to praise God for His merciful and loving nature.

Psalm 108 - Praising God's steadfastness.

Situation: Seeking to praise God in times of distress and after deliverance.

Application: Use this Psalm to express unwavering trust in God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

Psalm 109 - Lament and imprecation against enemies.

Situation: Experiencing profound betrayal or unjust treatment.

Application: Pray this Psalm to express deep anguish and seek God's justice against malicious foes.

Psalm 110 - Messianic Psalm about the exaltation of the Messiah as both king and priest.

Situation: Reflecting on the role of Christ in Christian theology.

Application: Use this Psalm to meditate on Christ's kingship and priesthood.

Psalm 122 - Joy and praise for Jerusalem, the city of God.

Situation: Celebrating the significance of a holy place or spiritual community.

Application: Recite this Psalm in the context of communal worship and joy at spiritual gatherings.

Psalm 124 - Thanksgiving for God's deliverance from enemies.

Situation: Reflecting on past deliverances and God's help.

Application: Use this Psalm to thank God for deliverance and acknowledge His help in overcoming enemies.

Psalm 131 - Expressing humility and trust in God's care.

Situation: Seeking simplicity and humility in a complicated or prideful situation.

Application: Recite this Psalm to embrace humility and trust in God's care, especially when feeling overwhelmed or proud.

Psalm 133 - Celebrating unity among God's people.

Situation: Valuing and promoting unity in a community or family.

Application: Use this Psalm to celebrate and encourage unity and harmony among believers or within any group.

Psalm 138 - Thanksgiving and praise for God's faithfulness and deliverance.

Situation: Reflecting on and celebrating God's faithfulness.

Application: Use this Psalm to offer thanks and praise to God for His steadfast love and answered prayers.

Psalm 139 - Celebrating God's omniscience and omnipresence.

Situation: Contemplating God's intimate knowledge and constant presence.

Application: Reflect on this Psalm to find comfort in God's all-knowing and ever-present nature, especially during moments of doubt or feeling unseen.

Psalm 141 - Supplication for God's guidance and protection.

Situation: Seeking divine guidance and protection in challenging times.

Application: Pray this Psalm when needing guidance to avoid wrongdoing and seeking protection from harm.

Psalm 142 - Lament and prayer for deliverance from enemies.

Situation: Feeling trapped or oppressed by difficult circumstances or people.

Application: Recite this Psalm when you cry out for God's help and deliverance when feeling isolated or under siege.

Psalm 143 - Supplication for God's mercy and guidance.

Situation: Experiencing distress and needing God's mercy and direction.

Application: Use this Psalm to seek God's mercy, guidance, and revitalization during times of personal crisis or spiritual dryness.

Psalm 144 - Praise for God's deliverance and blessings.

Situation: Acknowledging God's help in overcoming significant challenges.

Application: Use this Psalm to praise God for His deliverance and blessings, recognizing His role in personal or communal victories.

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David Loved His Enemies

Matthew 5:43-45 (KJV) - "[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Here is a breakdown of Matthew 5:43-45:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

The first part, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," is a direct reference to Leviticus 19:18, a well-known commandment in Jewish law. The phrase "hate thine enemy" was not a direct scriptural command but reflected a common interpretation or cultural practice. While the law commanded love for one's neighbor, some Jewish sects, such as the Essenes, promoted enmity towards outsiders or those viewed as God's enemies.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

Jesus calls for a radical approach to relationships. Instead of merely loving those who are easy to love (neighbors, friends), He commands His followers to love their enemies. We need to show genuine care and concern for those who oppose or harm us. After one breaks up with the person they are dating or with their spouse, they often say, "I wish the best for them." The question is, do they really mean it?

As Christians we should speak positively and wish good things for those who speak negatively of us. We often love people and hold them with a lot of respect before we hear of something ill that they have spoken against us.

When we hear someone has spoken badly about us, our minds automatically shift to think of the negative aspects about them so that we can retaliate by speaking negatively about them. Sometimes we try to create lies about those who have spoken evil against us so that we can do more damage to them than they have done to us. Thus, the cycle and the endless path of bad mouthing goes on.

Gossip is like a game of broken telephone, where the truth gets twisted beyond recognition. Gossip is like a viral meme, spreading faster than you can hit the share button. Gossip is like a pot of boiling water, bubbling over with exaggerated stories. Gossip is like a tangled web, easy to get caught in but difficult to untangle.

Gossip is like a bad hair day: embarrassing and hard to fix once it's out there. Gossip is like a snowball rolling down a hill, starting small but growing out of control. Gossip is like a bad smell, lingering long after the source has disappeared. Gossip is like a wildfire, spreading quickly and leaving destruction in its wake.

Gossip is like a bad habit, hard to break and never really satisfying. Gossip is like a magnet for drama, attracting trouble wherever it goes. Gossip is like a game of telephone, where the message changes with each whisper. Gossip is like a bag of spilled marbles, rolling in every direction and impossible to gather up. Gossip is like a runaway train, gaining speed and momentum with every rumor. Gossip is like a clown car, packed with exaggerations and unlikely scenarios. Gossip is like a swarm of mosquitoes, annoying and hard to get rid of.

We should not repay evil with evil. To most people including Christians those words from Jesus sound like foolish advice. We often think that when we treat someone who has done evil to us well, they will think that we are weak, foolish, and easy to play with. Sometimes, some of them may think of us like that. However, when God tells you to do something, we should be rest assured that what God has commanded us is the best thing to do.

Being good to those who are bad to you shows mental, personality and character strength. This is because it is not something that comes naturally as human beings. Almost everybody in the world retaliates if they have the capacity to do so. When someone hits you and you are stronger than them, they expect you to hit them back.

So, if you hit them back, you will be preaching to them the same message that they are accustomed to, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If you fail to hit them back and instead, do something good to them like give them a gift, most likely they will be shocked. They will question themselves. As we interact with people, we should know that we are working with people's hearts. Changing someone's heart is not an easy thing. God is the only one who can change hearts. In His divine love, He gives us such excellent strategies for changing hearts. Our work is not to argue with God but to apply those strategies.

"Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Intercede with God on behalf of those who mistreat and persecute you. It is easy to love people who do good things to you. One does not have to be a Christian to do that. However, loving someone who has hurt you is very difficult. We need the Holy Spirit's power to do that. Those who mistreat us at the workplace, in church, on the streets, in school, or anywhere else, should be part and parcel of our prayers. Sometimes God may have allowed them to mistreat us so that we can be able to remember them.

What do I mean? When someone minds their own business and does not tamper with yours, it might not be easy to remember them. But when someone mistreats us, we find it almost impossible to forget them. This is because we keep on thinking of the evil that they did to us. Now, since we have them constantly in our minds, God wants us to use our memories of them to pray for them. This will not only help them, but it will also help us to be in a better mental state.

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Children of God: By loving enemies, believers demonstrate that they are true children of their Heavenly Father God, reflecting His character and nature. If God only loved the people who please Him, we would all be dead. Romans 3:23 (KJV) – "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 6:23 (KJV) – "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 that everybody is a sinner, and it also tells us in Romans 6:23 that the wage of sin is death. However, we keep on sinning, but God has not yet killed us. He forgives us time and again. As His children, who are created in His image, we need to forgive others. We should show love to our enemies.

Impartial Goodness: God shows common grace to all people, irrespective of their moral standing. The sun rises and the rain falls on both the righteous and the wicked, demonstrating God's impartial and unconditional kindness. John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God loved everybody, believers, and unbelievers. He gave His only begotten son to die for everybody. The love that God gives to us is undeserved.

Emulation of God's Love: Just as God extends His kindness to all humanity, God calls believers to extend love and kindness to all, including their enemies. This reflects God's love and mercy, which is not contingent upon human behavior.

Jesus challenges His followers to transcend conventional morality and embrace a higher standard of kindness and love. By loving enemies and praying for persecutors, believers align themselves with God, who extends grace and mercy to all people. This teaching underscores the transformative power of love and the importance of embodying God's character in everyday life.

Let us look at how David loved his enemies:

David spares King Saul for the First Time

1 Samuel 24:4-7 (AMP) – "[4] David's men said to him, "Behold, *this is* the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will hand over your enemy to you, and you shall do to him as seems good to you.'" Then David arose [in the darkness] and stealthily cut off the hem (edge) of Saul's robe. [5] Afterward, David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the hem of Saul's *robe*. [6] He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, since he is the anointed of the Lord." [7] So David strongly rebuked his men with these words and did not let them rise up against Saul. Saul got up, left the cave and went on his way."

When Saul heard that David was in the Wilderness of Engedi, he took 3,000 chosen men out of all Israel and went to look for David upon the rocks of the wild goats (1 Samuel 24:1-2). Saul sought David every day, but God did not deliver David into his hands (1 Samuel 23:14). Prior to that, Saul had explicitly told his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David (1 Samuel 19:1). Therefore, when he was looking for David in 1 Samuel 24:1-2, he most likely wanted to kill him.

God kept on protecting David from Saul's cruel hands. One day all the troubles that David faced seemed to come to an end because he got the opportunity to kill King Saul. Killing King Saul would mark the end of his misery as he would not have to keep on running away and hiding as he used to. He would have probably inherited the throne because he was already anointed by Prophet Samuel.

David's men convinced him to do it by telling David that it is God who has delivered Saul to his hands. His men perceived a message which had not come from God to have come from God. The situation at hand looked like God was handing over Saul to David's hand. If David did not have a close relationship with God, if he did not know God's Word, he would have killed Saul as his men suggested. If he had read God's Word in a shallow way, he would have been convinced that it was indeed God's will to kill Saul.

Some counterfeits are usually very similar to the original, one might not be able to tell the difference unless they have spent enough time with the originals. Sometimes and often, Satan's deception is usually so close to the truth that you need to have spent enough time with the truth to distinguish it from the lie.

An opportunity that looks like it is from God which is not from God can come to you. You need to be well acquainted with God's Word to know if it is truly a God-given opportunity. Some try to shortcut the noble and uplifting process of studying God's Word by seeking prophets to tell them if a certain event in their lives is the will of God or not. Such people risk falling into the hands of false prophets who may misguide them.

It may not seem so, but it is dangerous not to study God's Word daily. It is suicidal not to study God's Word because God's Word is life. Nearly all problems you face in your life are because you do not know what the Word of God says in that particular area of your life.

David cut off the hem of Saul's robe. He was so close to killing Saul, but he chose not to. He overcame that temptation. Sometimes we can make an effort to sin, then when we are about to sin, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, or something happens to block us from sinning.

Saul of the New Testament (whose name was later changed to Paul) was going to persecute Christians then on his way to Damascus, he encountered Christ (Acts 9:1-6). This encounter transformed his life, and he did not continue with the journey. Sometimes, you may be going to commit fornication or adultery then while you are on the way, something happens to block you. Do not continue with the journey, just go back.

You may be planning to rob, and you have put a lot of effort and resources into the planning and execution of it, then while you are about to do it, something happens to stop you. Do not look at the effort and resources you have wasted, obey God and retreat from executing that wicked plan.

You may have made a bomb to destroy people and/or property but have not launched it and you want to launch it, but God speaks to you (in His various ways) to stop you from launching. Do not say that because you have already engaged in the sin of making it, you can also engage in the sin of launching it.

Some people may justify their continuation in sin by saying because they have sinned in the thoughts and sin is sin, they can as well continue executing that sin. They are wrong. All sin leads to death but there are degrees of sin in the sense that some sins bring more damage to people than others. For example, if David had killed Saul, he would have brought more damage to Saul and his family than by just cutting the hem of his garment.

David responded to his men and told them that he cannot harm Saul, and he stopped his men from harming Saul. 1 Chronicles 16:22 (KJV) – "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." All leaders (believers and unbelievers) are given that leadership role by God to fulfill a certain purpose.

Daniel 1:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. [2] And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god." Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king but the Bible tells us that it was God who gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hands.

Therefore, we should not insult, gossip, beat, kill or do anything to harm our leaders because they have been given that leadership role by God. Instead, we should pray for them and if we can access them, we can correct them respectfully. We can also find other Godly ways to assist them in making their leadership better. What God has enthroned let Him dethrone.

1 Samuel 24:10-15 (AMP) – ""[10] Behold, your eyes have seen today how the Lord had given you into my hand in the cave. Some told me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not reach out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.' [11] Look, my father! Indeed, see the hem of your robe in my hand! Since I cut off the hem of your robe and did not kill you, know and understand [without question] that there is no evil or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait to take my life. [12] May the Lord judge between me and you; and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. [13] As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. [14] After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue [with three thousand men]? A dead dog, a single flea? [15] May the Lord be the judge and render judgment between me and you; and may He see and plead my cause and vindicate me *by saving me* from your hand.""

In 1 Samuel 24:10-15, we witness a profound display of integrity and mercy from David, the future king of Israel, towards King Saul, his adversary. This passage encapsulates a pivotal moment in the relationship between these two figures, showcasing David's steadfast commitment to righteousness and his refusal to strike back despite facing impending danger.

Despite being pursued by Saul, who seeks to kill him out of jealousy and fear, David recognizes Saul's divine appointment as king and refrains from raising his hand against him. In this passage we can see David addressing King Saul respectfully. He calls him, “my lord.” David's actions exemplify his adherence to the principles of righteousness and his unwavering faith in God's sovereignty.

David's words to Saul reveal his innocence and his commitment to safeguarding justice. He presents evidence of his innocence by demonstrating that he had the opportunity to harm Saul but instead chose to spare his life. By cutting off a corner of Saul's robe while he was vulnerable in the cave, David proves that he harbored no ill intent towards the king and acted with restraint even in the face of provocation.

Furthermore, David appeals to God as the ultimate avenger and judge, acknowledging that only God has the authority to mete out justice and render judgment. Despite Saul's relentless pursuit and David's precarious situation, he entrusts his cause to God, confident that God will vindicate him and deliver him from harm. David's reliance on God's justice reflects his deep faith and his belief in divine providence.

Moreover, David's humility is evident in his characterization of himself as a "dead dog" and a "single flea" in comparison to the king of Israel. Despite his own rising stature and future destiny as king, David maintains a posture of humility and deference towards Saul, refusing to exalt himself above his rightful place.

In conclusion, 1 Samuel 24:10-15 portrays David as a paragon of integrity, mercy, and faithfulness to God. His actions serve as a timeless example of righteousness in the face of adversity, reminding us of the importance of upholding moral principles even in the most problematic circumstances. David's unwavering trust in God's justice and his refusal to retaliate against his enemy demonstrate the power of faith and the enduring legacy of righteousness.

1 Samuel 24:16-19 (AMP) – "[16] When David had finished saying these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Then Saul raised his voice and wept. [17] He said to David, "You are more righteous *and* upright [in God's eyes] than I; for you have done good to me, but I have done evil to you. [18] You have declared today the good that you have done to me, for when the Lord put me into your hand, you did not kill me. [19] For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? So may the Lord reward you with good in return for what you have done for me this day."

Saul (David's enemy) blessed David because David had spared his life. It is possible for our enemies to bless us if we show faith in God. One way of showing faith in God is by loving our enemies like David did. Our enemies are there for a reason. Instead of wishing them a quick death or harm, we should love them. Saul wept after he heard how David had an opportunity to kill him but chose to spare his life. Through his righteous actions, David touched Saul's heart. Faith in God touches hearts. Righteousness touches hearts.

1 Samuel 24:20-22 (AMP) – "[20] Now, behold, I know that you will certainly be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. [21] So now swear to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household (extended family)." [22] David gave Saul his oath; and Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the mountain stronghold."

In this gripping moment from 1 Samuel 24:20-22, we find ourselves amidst an intense exchange between two of ancient Israel's notable figures: King Saul, the current king at the time, and the future monarch, David.

As the dust settles from their recent wilderness encounter, Saul acknowledges David's foreseeable rise to the throne. Saul concedes, "Now, behold, I know that you will certainly be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand" (1 Samuel 24:20, AMP). It is a deeply significant moment, as Saul, once the powerful King of Israel, acknowledges David as the new leader of Israel.

However, amidst the swirling currents of political intrigue and personal ambition, Saul reaches out to David with a plea that transcends the immediate power struggle. He beseeches David to swear by the Lord that he will not harm Saul's descendants or erase his name from his family lineage. It

is a plea tinged with fear and vulnerability, as Saul wrestles with the weight of his legacy and the uncertainty surrounding his family's future.

In response, David, known for his unwavering honor and integrity, solemnly pledges his oath to Saul. Despite years of persecution and the looming conflict threat, David extends an act of mercy and compassion. It is a moment of profound empathy amidst the turmoil of power dynamics, as David keeps his word and extends grace to his foe.

As Saul leaves, perhaps with a newfound sense of peace or resignation, David and his men ascend to their mountain stronghold. Their path forward remains uncertain, yet infused with a sense of purpose and destiny. It is a moment that captures the intricacies of human relationships, the interplay between ambition and forgiveness, and the enduring strength of honor and integrity in the face of adversity.

David spares King Saul for the Second Time

1 Samuel 26:1-2 (AMP) – "[1] The Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding on the hill of Hachilah, *east of* Jeshimon?" [2] So Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, taking with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David [there] in the wilderness of Ziph. "

1 Samuel 26:3-5 (AMP) – "[3] Saul camped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road east of Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came into the wilderness after him, [4] David sent out spies, and he learned that Saul was definitely coming. [5] So David arose and went to the place where Saul had camped, and saw the spot where Saul lay, as well as Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying inside the circle of the camp, with the army camped around him."

1 Samuel 26:6-11 (AMP) – "[6] Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." [7] So David and Abishai went to the army during the night, and there was Saul lying asleep inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him. [8] Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your

enemy into your hand this day; now then, please let me strike him with the spear *driving it* to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time.” [9] But David said to Abishai, “Do not kill him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord’s anointed [king] and be guiltless (innocent)?” [10] David also said, “As the Lord lives, most certainly the Lord will strike him [in His own time and way], or his day will come and he will die, or he will go down into battle and be carried off [dead]. [11] The Lord forbid that I would put out my hand against the Lord’s anointed; but now take the spear that is by his head and the jug of water, and let us go.””

Saul did not learn his lesson even after David had spared his life. He kept on looking for David to harm him. In 1 Samuel 26:1-2, Saul hears that David is in the Wilderness of Ziph and he goes to search for him there. Like the previous time, he goes with three thousand chosen men (the best men) to look for David. It is an army of three thousand and one people against one person.

While in the wilderness, David saw Saul coming after him, but Saul did not see David. When you are deeply rooted in God, you shall be able to see and discern the attacks that are coming against you before they reach you. David went to where Saul had camped and saw the place where Saul lay.

Together with Abishai, David went to the army during the night, and there was Saul lying asleep inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him. At that time, David was not yet king and he did not have an army but he was able to find Saul. He had a few loyal friends around him. Saul had an army of three thousand with him but he was still not able to find David. Lack of faith in God plus lots of effort leads to nothing.

Abishai asked David for permission to strike Saul but David refused and told him that one cannot put his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless. Thus, he spared Saul’s life and forgave him the second time.

David expected Saul to honor his own words after he spared his life the first time but he did not. This is the same fate we face with God. God expects us to honor our words when He forgives us but we do not, we keep on repeating the same sin and he keeps on forgiving us. Very few human beings can forgive someone who does the same evil to them more than once. By doing that, David showed tremendous faith in God.

1 Samuel 26:17-20 (AMP) – "[17] Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king!" [18] And David said, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand? [19] Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord has incited you against me, let Him accept an offering [from me]; but if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord, because they have driven me out this day to keep me from sharing in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' [20] Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the Lord; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as when one hunts a [defenseless] partridge in the mountains.""

In 1 Samuel 26:17-20, we encounter a dialogue between King Saul and David. This passage is a testament to David's unwavering faith, his profound sense of justice, and his humility in the face of unwarranted persecution. Through this interaction, we see the depth of David's trust in God and his adherence to divine principles, even when confronted with mortal danger and personal injustice.

"Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' And David said, 'It is my voice, my lord the king!'" (1 Samuel 26:17, AMP). King Saul's recognition and the affectionate term "my son" reveal a close relationship between him and David. Despite Saul's intention to kill David, this address suggests a lingering respect and familiarity. David's respectful response, "my lord the king," underscores his continued loyalty and honor towards Saul, reflecting his faith in God's anointed leadership, even when the leader himself is flawed.

David's plea follows: "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?" (1 Samuel 26:18, AMP). This question is rhetorical and it is a genuine cry for justice. David, having done no evil, cannot understand the basis for Saul's relentless pursuit. His question exposes the irrationality of King Saul's actions and highlights the injustice of the situation. This moment encapsulates David's faith in the righteousness of his cause and his belief in divine justice. He trusts that truth will prevail because he is innocent before God and man.

When you are innocent before God and man you have nothing to worry about. God is a God of justice and He sees even in the most secret and darkest places. Men's justice may seem not to favor you but that should not make you fret because God is the judge of all judges.

David continues, “Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord has incited you against me, let Him accept an offering [from me]; but if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord, because they have driven me out this day to keep me from sharing in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’” (1 Samuel 26:19, AMP).

Here, David presents two potential causes for Saul’s pursuit: divine will or human deceit. If God has incited Saul, David is willing to offer an offering to Him, demonstrating his readiness to reconcile with God. However, if men have influenced Saul, David calls for divine reprisal on them. This highlights David’s faith in God’s ultimate justice and his belief that no human deceit can impede divine will.

David feels driven away from his rightful place in Israel, equating his exile to being cut off from God's inheritance. This separation not only impacts his physical life but also his spiritual life, as it threatens his ability to worship God in his community. David then employs vivid metaphors: “Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the Lord; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as when one hunts a [defenseless] partridge in the mountains.” (1 Samuel 26:20, AMP).

By comparing himself to a "single flea" and a "defenseless partridge," David underscores the futility and disproportion of Saul’s pursuit. These metaphors highlight his insignificance and vulnerability, contrasting the massive resources Saul expends to capture him. It also reflects David's humility and his faith in God's protection. He believes that his life, no matter how insignificant it might seem, is under divine care and that unjust actions against him are undoubtedly against God's will.

In this passage, David’s faith shines brightly. He stands as a model of humility, integrity, and resolute trust in divine justice. Despite the personal danger and injustice he faces, David does not waver in his respect for God’s anointed king or in his belief that God will ultimately judge rightly. His respectful plea to Saul, his willingness to make an offering if he is at fault, and his invocation of divine reprisal on deceitful men all reflect a profound faith that God’s purposes will prevail. This interaction not only underscores the themes of justice and mercy but also illustrates the deep-seated faith that guided David’s actions throughout his life. David’s faith, as depicted in 1 Samuel 26:17-20, offers timeless lessons on trust, humility, and the importance of aligning one’s actions with divine will, regardless of the circumstances.

David's Kindness to Mephibosheth Jonathan's Son

2 Samuel 9:1-3 (AMP) – "[1] And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house (family) of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" [2] There was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, so they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" He said, "*I am* your servant." [3] And the king said, "Is there no longer anyone *left* of the house (family) of Saul to whom I may show the goodness *and* graciousness of God?" Ziba replied to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan, [one] whose feet are crippled."

In 2 Samuel 9:1, David asks if there is anyone left from Saul's house whom he may show kindness for Jonathan's sake. When David rose to the throne, he thought about his enemy Saul. Not only did he think about him, but he also thought of how he was going to benefit him.

Saul was dead and his son Jonathan was also dead. Therefore, he inquired if there was anyone left in Saul's house that he could help. After making that request, he was shown Ziba who was Saul's servant. He agreed to help Ziba. This action clearly depicted the magnanimity of David's heart.

How many of us think of the servants to our relatives and friends leave alone our enemies? We barely know the names of the servants to our relatives. David went the extra mile to show kindness to Saul's servant Ziba (1 Samuel 9:3). As if that were not enough, he asked Ziba if there was anyone else left in the house of Saul that he would show kindness to.

David did not rest from going an extra mile to benefit his enemy. He kept on going the extra mile. That is the character of God. God keeps on going the extra mile to save us. He does not get tired of helping us despite our innumerable sins. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:45). Ziba tells David that Jonathan's son Mephibosheth who was lame on both feet is still alive.

2 Samuel 9:4-5 (AMP) – "[4] So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba replied to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar." [5] Then King David sent *word* and had him brought from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar."

Ziba (:(צִיבָא The name Ziba likely means "statue" or "pillar" in Hebrew. It can also be interpreted as "station" or "standing," symbolizing stability or an established position.

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Machir (:**מָכִיר)** Machir means "sold" or "he who sells" in Hebrew. It could also carry the connotation of someone who is a "merchant" or "trader."

Ammiel (:**עַמִּיאֵל)** The name Ammiel is a compound of two Hebrew words: "Am" (עַם) meaning "people" and "El" (אֵל) meaning "God." Thus, Ammiel means "people of God" or "my kinsman is God."

Lo-debar (:**לֹא דְבָר)** This name is also a compound of two Hebrew words: "Lo" (לֹא) meaning "no" or "not" and "Dabar" (דְבָר) meaning "pasture" or "word." Therefore, Lo-debar means "no pasture" or "no word." It denotes a place that is barren, desolate, or lacking communication.

David (:דָּוִד) This name in Hebrew means "beloved" or "friend." It derives from the root word דּוֹד (dod), which means "beloved" or "uncle." David is a significant biblical figure, known as the second king of Israel and a man "after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). His name reflects his beloved status both in the eyes of God and his people.

In this particular context, the names Machir, Ammiel and Lo-debar are mentioned repeatedly. This repetition denotes that they carry some significance. Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson Mephibosheth was dwelling in the house of Machir (a trader) the son of Ammiel (which means people of God) in Lo-debar (a barren or desolate place).

In 2 Samuel 9:4 we are told that Machir was dwelling in Lo-debar. In 2 Samuel 9:5 we are told that Machir was from Lo-debar. Mephibosheth was dwelling with him because probably he had nowhere else to go to. He was the grandson of the former king but after his father and grandfather died he moved from the palace to go to a barren and desolate land. Another meaning for Lo-debar is "no word." Any place that is not governed by the Word of God is barren and desolate.

In that land, Machir must have been a struggling merchant/trader. David called Mephibosheth to come out of that barren and desolate place to his palace where there was abundance of the Word of God and as a result, abundance of everything. It was the will of God for David to do so. God intends for His children to do the same thing, to call others out of darkness into his marvelous light. He expects us to call others out of poverty to the true riches. He expects us to call others out of scarcity to abundance.

How do we do that? By using the Word of God, transmitting it to everyone within our reach and to all in our memory scope. It will be good practice when you remember to check up on someone to pray for them before you talk to them. God might guide you on what to tell them when you talk to them. David, whose name means beloved or friend, told Ziba, whose name means stability, to call Mephibosheth out of that place.

The Bible says that Mephibosheth was lame on both feet, meaning he would struggle to get from where he was to where David was. However, despite the struggle, he was able to reach there. We give up too easily. When we are totally determined and focused on going somewhere, we will get there no matter the shortcomings we may be having and the obstacles we encounter on the way. If Mephibosheth was able to reach where David was despite being lame, no one should have an excuse not to access the kingdom of God.

2 Samuel 9:6-13 (AMP) – "[6] Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David and fell face down and lay himself down [in respect]. David said, "Mephibosheth." And he answered, "Here is your servant!" [7] David said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will certainly show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall always eat at my table." [8] Again Mephibosheth lay himself face down and said, "What is your servant, that you would be concerned for a dead dog like me?" [9] Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and to all his house (family). [10] You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in *the produce*, so that your master's grandson may have food to eat; but Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. [11] Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do according to everything that my lord the king commands." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. [12] Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house were servants to Mephibosheth. [13] So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. And he was lame in both feet."

David promised Mephibosheth that he will restore to him the land of his grandfather Saul and invited him to eat at the king's table daily. King David restored to Mephibosheth everything that belonged to Saul and his family. As if that was not enough, he gave Ziba the work to cultivate the

land for Mephibosheth that he may have food to eat. Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. They were all commanded to work for Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth felt that he did not deserve all that. Probably he might have known that his grandfather Saul was unkind to David. Being lame on both feet, Mephibosheth was to some degree helpless, thus many people might have seen him as a burden, particularly after Jonathan and Saul died. When one is left as an orphan few people show interest in them, worse off is one who is left as a disabled orphan.

Relatives and friends will often treat you right if your parents are rich or if they have high status in society and they know that they can benefit from them. Once the parents die, no matter how rich the parent was, the children often suffer in the hands of relatives and the community at large. Mephibosheth might have gone through some dark moments, people rejecting, neglecting, and treating him with contempt. Therefore, he could not believe when King David showed him kindness and invited him to eat at his table all the days of his life.

Usually, the rich dine with the rich. Now this is a poor, disabled man invited to dine with the king. David followed the Biblical principle in Luke 14:13-14.

Luke 14:13-14 (KJ21) - "[13] But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: [14] And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." In this narrative we see King David showing humility even after being appointed as king. Most people are usually humble before they are appointed to positions of power. Before celebrities become famous, they are often very humble.

Before people become rich they show high level humility. They will not fight back against those who mistreat them. Once they get to positions of power and influence, they will revenge to those who once treated them with contempt before they became powerful. Not King David. King David sought to show kindness to the family of the once powerful Saul who mistreated him. When we have leaders like that, we can be sure that the jurisdiction they are leading is headed for prosperity.

David's Kindness to Shimei

2 Samuel 16:5-6 (AMP) – "[5] When King David came to Bahurim, a man named Shimei, the son of Gera, came out from there. He was of the family of Saul's household and he was cursing continually as he came out. [6] He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; yet all the people and all the warriors *remained* on his right and on his left."

The following are the meanings of the names listed in the above verse:

David (דָּוִד): As previously mentioned, the name David means "beloved" or "friend."

Bahurim (בָּחוּרִים): The name Bahurim likely means "young men" or "choice ones." It is derived from the Hebrew word "bahur" (בָּחוּר), which means "young man" or "chosen."

Shimei (שִׁמְעִי): The name Shimei comes from the root word "shama" (שָׁמַע), which means "to hear" or "to listen." Shimei can be translated as "God has heard" or "he who hears."

Gera (גֵּרָא): The name Gera means "grain" or "a kernel" in Hebrew. It can also imply "a sojourner" or "a stranger" depending on the context.

When King David came to the place of young men (Bahurim), a man named Shimei (Which means God has heard), the son of Gera (which means stranger) started cursing and throwing stones at him. Because Bahurim means young men, chances are high that Shimei must have been a young man. The energy he had of throwing stones is not easy to find with an old man. David might have been his senior in years but he still did not show the king respect. After David, had been kind to the people who were shown to him of Saul's household (Ziba and Mephibosheth), Shimei could not be grateful of what David did to their household.

The story continues:

2 Samuel 16:9-13 (AMP) – "[9] Then Abishai [David's nephew], the son of Zeruiah, said to the king, "Why should this dead dog (despicable person) curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." [10] But the king said, "What business is this of yours, O sons of Zeruiah? If Shimei is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'Curse David,' then who should say, 'Why have you done so?'" [11] Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Look, my son [Absalom] who came from my own body, is seeking my life; how much more [reason] now [does] this Benjamite [have to curse me]? Let him alone and let him curse, for [it could be that] the Lord has told him [to do

it]. [12] Perhaps the Lord will look on the wrong done to me [by Shimei, if he is acting on his own]; and [in that case perhaps] the Lord will this day return good to me in place of his cursing." [13] So David and his men went on the road; and Shimei went along on the hillside close beside David and cursed as he went and threw stones and dust at him."

Abishai asked David for permission to kill Shimei. David stopped Abishai from doing it. Shimei spoke about Absalom (David's son) wanting to kill David. David told Abishai that Absalom, his own son, wants to kill him, thus Shimei has no reason to spare his life because they are not related. He told Abishai to leave Shimei alone to continue cursing because the Lord might have told him to do it. Then he told him that maybe the Lord will look at the evil done to him by Shimei and will recompense him. That is high-level faith.

Exodus 14:14 (KJV) – "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Isaiah 49:25 (KJ21) - "But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

David trusted that God has more power to fight his battles than he has (even though he was a mighty king). He knew that God could avenge his enemies in a way that he was not able to. We waste a lot of time fighting our own battles instead of leaving them to God. David was king but he did not use his authority and power to defend himself. He let Shimei curse, throw stones and dust at him. When he fought Goliath and all the battles he successfully undertook, he was fighting for the people of Israel, not for himself alone. That showed selflessness.

Before you do anything as a leader, ask yourself how that course of action will help other people besides yourself. If it is going to benefit you alone, it is not worth taking. This principle should guide our career choices, our business decisions and everything else in our lives. Seek to serve as many people as possible. Every businessperson should ask themselves, "How can I serve more people than I'm now serving?"

The rewards that God gives you is proportionate to the amount of people you are serving. People want to make more money without increasing the amount of people they are serving. Thus, some of them increase the price of their products without adding value to that product instead of increasing the market base. The same happens with some of our countries' leaders. They increase

taxation without showing the value for that added tax percentage. David's success came by seeking the good of others and not of himself alone.

2 Samuel 19:18-23 (AMP) – "[18] Then they [repeatedly] crossed the ford to bring over the king's household (family), and to do what pleased him. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan, [19] and said to the king, "Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem, so that the king would take it to heart. [20] For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore, behold, I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king." [21] But Abishai the son of Zeruiah said, "Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" [22] David said, "What business is this of yours, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be an adversary to me today? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" [23] Therefore the king said to Shimei, "You shall not be put to death." And so, the king gave him his promise."

Finally, Shimei realized his sin and David forgave him. Abishai, the son of King David's sister Zeruiah was not pleased to see that. He remembered all the trouble that Shimei had caused David and concluded that he is not worthy of forgiveness, and he deserved death.

Abishai behaved like the elder son who was angry that his father prepared a feast for the younger as he felt that the younger son was undeserving. Those two illustrations are excellent examples of the gift of grace that Christ gives us. Christ has given us grace even though we are undeserving.

Normally, in most countries, if a person is locked up in prison and they behave well, the person is given a presidential pardon to put an end to the sentence he was serving before the sentence actually ends. Those who receive such pardons are usually deserving. Not us. God gives us gifts that we totally do not deserve.

Through such gifts we experience a love that no other love can match. If we are genuine Christians, we shall be able to give people gifts that they do not deserve (does not have to be material gifts). Through us, people will experience the infinite love of Christ and as they are drawn to Him, they will love righteousness (Christ) and hate sin.

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A Man After God’s Own Heart

1 Samuel 13:14 (KJV) - "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Acts 13:22 (KJ21) - "And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.'"

Twice in the Bible, David is referred to as a man after God’s own heart. Now someone may think that David was always holy and that he never made mistakes. David made various mistakes but he always repented and sought to please God even after making those mistakes. He always rose up when he fell and continued with the journey.

The Mistakes of David

“It was the spirit of self-confidence and self-exaltation that prepared the way for David's fall. Flattery and the subtle allurements of power and luxury were not without effect upon him. Intercourse with surrounding nations also exerted an influence for evil. According to the customs prevailing among Eastern rulers, crimes not to be tolerated in subjects were uncondemned in the king; the monarch was not under obligation to exercise the same self-restraint as the subject. All this tended to lessen David's sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And instead of relying in humility upon the power of Jehovah, he began to trust his own wisdom and might. As soon as Satan can separate the soul from God, the only Source of strength, he will seek to arouse the unholy desires of man's carnal nature. The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle. It begins in apparently small things—the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 717.2, Ellen G. White.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and impregnated her (2 Samuel 11:2-5). He ordered the murder of Uriah by sending him to the front lines of war and withdrawing support from him (2 Samuel 11:14-17). He took a census of Israel and Judah, which

was against God’s will, and brought a plague upon the land (2 Samuel 24:1-17). He neglected his parental duties and failed to discipline his sons Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah when they committed crimes and rebelled against him (2 Samuel 13:1-39; 15:1-18:33; 1 Kings 1:5-53).

The problem with some of us is that when we commit a sin we distance ourselves from God. We have this feeling that God sees us as people who are wicked and that He wants nothing to do with us. This thinking might be because we think that God is like us. Usually, as human beings when someone wrongs us we want nothing to do with them. We avoid them at all costs. If we see that person moving towards us from a distance we choose another direction. God is not like that. When we wrong Him, He moves closer to us to comfort us and to help us do what is right.

Satan would have us believe that God only wants those who are righteous. Thus he encourages us to join his camp of sinners. God hates sin but He loves sinners. Satan loves sin but he hates sinners. In fact, the Devil hates everybody.

When you move far away from God and move closer to him, he will seem like he is welcoming you with open hands but what he will do is that he will take advantage of your vulnerability and do his best to destroy you. You may be struggling with a certain sin and you are a Christian, the more you move closer to God, the better you will be.

David's faith was steadfast and unwavering, exemplified by his trust in God throughout his life. Whether facing the giant Goliath with nothing but a sling and a few stones, fleeing from King Saul's relentless pursuit, or repenting earnestly after his moral failings, David consistently turned to God for strength, guidance, and forgiveness. His Psalms reflect a profound reliance on God and a relationship with God, showcasing a deep spiritual intimacy and an unshakeable belief in God's sovereignty and mercy. David's faith was a cornerstone of his leadership and legacy, making him a man after God's own heart.

Faith wins wars. Faith defeats foes. Faith puts the enemy on toes. Faith goes beyond flaws. Faith opens doors. Faith brings goals. Faith calls the shots. Faith is the victory.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please forgive me for all the sins that I have committed. Forgive me for lacking faith and cowering whenever I encounter an obstacle. Thank You for enabling me to learn about this shepherd boy turned king called David. I thank You for the profound faith lessons that I have learned and how he moved by faith overcoming obstacle after obstacle.

Please help me to overcome all the obstacles in my life and make me focus on You whenever I encounter a challenging life situation. God, You are bigger than all my problems, let none of them prevail over me. God, You are more powerful than all the battle tools, no weapon formed against me will prosper. Please Lord deliver me from all evil.

Please help me not to focus on those who misunderstand me and give me the heart to love my enemies as You have loved me. I am not too young nor too old to serve you, therefore, help me to serve You always. Please help me to cultivate the habit of waking up early so that I can have more hours to fulfill the purpose that You have given me. Above all, Lord, help me to be a man after Your own heart. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Would you like to wake up early? Plan your morning schedule, present it to God and ask God to help you wake up at a specific time in the morning to fulfill your life purpose.
2. What major and minor challenges are you facing? List them down then pray over them.
3. Ensure you have done the necessary household duties before you step out of the house because charity begins at home.
4. What are some of the things that you have heard from people that show they have misunderstood you? Write them down and ask God to take the burden off your shoulders.
5. What is it that you want to do that you are finding to be so big and unachievable? Tell yourself, yes you can. It can be good to affirm yourself every morning with Philippians 4:13 Bible verse.
6. Make a covenant with God. Ask God for a specific thing and attach a Godly promise to it.
7. What mistakes have you made in life that are bringing you shame and guilt? Ask God to forgive you and to take those burdens away.

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CHAPTER 61

THE FAITH OF JONATHAN

Jonathan's love was like an art masterpiece, never growing old,

He loved David as himself, showing faith in the living God,

He valued good relationships more than silver and gold,

Jonathan's faith in God is one to behold.

Jonathan's devotion, a river of valor, gentle but strong,

In friendship's currents, they journeyed along,

Through the trials of life, in its ebb and its flow,

Jonathan's love was the anchor, a steady, unwavering glow.

Jonathan tasted the honey, had his energy restored,

He trusted the Heavenly Father and knew that good comes from the Lord,

If we spend more time with God, we can never get bored,

If we are loyal and faithful to Him, we will have a good record.

By Jonathan's right doing, Mephibosheth was blessed,

In their friendship's embrace, they found peace, no less,

Though life's path had dealt him a challenging hand,

Friendship's grace from Jonathan helped him stand.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Jonathan, the son of King Saul in the Bible, is often remembered for his strong faith, loyalty, and friendship with David. The name Jonathan means Jehovah has given.

1 Samuel 14:1 (KJV) – "Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father."

In 1 Samuel 14:1, we see that Jonathan did not work alone. He had an armor bearer. It is an act of faith to cooperate with others to accomplish the work that God has given us. God, Creator of all things with infinite power in His hands, does not work alone, even though He can do so. God assigns each angel tasks to carry out.

Moreover, He gives us human beings the privilege to cooperate with Him with our various abilities and resources and be a part of His grand plan. Jesus, the Son of God, had disciples to assist Him in spreading the gospel. Each great prophet had a mentee that he walked with. Elijah mentored Elisha. Jonathan was no exception. Jonathan had an armor bearer whom he mentored.

A YouTube content creator named Abel Mutua narrates how his Mercedes Benz got damaged inside his mechanic's garage. The mechanic was highly trained in repairing Mercedes vehicles but did not train his subordinate staff. His subordinates were probably assigned light work, like playing the role of messengers in that workshop. Lack of capacity building made one of the interns damage the vehicle's engine in that Abel could not use his car again.

Sometimes, people are reluctant to train and mentor those below them because they fear competition. They want to remain at the top and avoid anyone else coming close. Another reason

is some are so preoccupied with their job that they barely find time to mentor others. Some place low regard on mentoring because they lack trust in others and think that other people cannot do the job as well as them. Therefore, they resolve to do the entire work alone without mentoring and delegating.

1 Samuel 14:6 (KJV) – "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

"For there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." This is a statement of confidence. It is a statement of faith. Jonathan believed that God is victorious and the number of soldiers in battle would not determine His victory. Nothing stops the Lord from doing His work. Nothing prevents Him from making His children victorious. God allows us to cooperate with Him in His grand plan, but He does not depend on us for the success of His work. It would be a tremendous thing if everyone in the world preached the gospel. However, God is not dependent on the number of people who choose to serve Him. If only one person in the world decides to serve God, God's work will still be effective.

In the ancient world, the Israelite nation was the only nation that believed in God. Therefore, God used them mightily to pull more people to him from other countries. It would have been astounding if all nations believed in God. However, God's work was not halted despite most of the population not believing in Him. If everyone in church returned tithe, it would be incredible. Studies have been conducted and have shown that in most churches, only 25% of the population faithfully return tithes and offerings. Despite the minority being faithful in returning offerings, operations in those churches run smoothly. God's work will always succeed, whether by many or by few. Jonathan understood this. He might have spent his time wisely communing with God to know that.

1 Samuel 14:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. [10] But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us."

"The Lord has delivered them into our hand," Jonathan spoke victory before he gained victory. The Bible says in Romans 8:37 (KJV) – "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." As children of God, we are not just conquerors but more than conquerors. We are not about

to conquer. We have already conquered. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What did Jonathan and his armor bearer hope for? They hoped for victory. They believed that they were victorious before they got the actual win.

Most people do not pursue their call zealously because they are unsure whether it will succeed. They think of all the possibilities of failure, and as a result, they get discouraged before they start working on their given assignment. Some get discouraged by listening and looking at people who have failed when trying to pursue something similar to what they want to pursue. What they fail to understand is that we all have different paths.

The fact that somebody did not get a job after studying a certain course in college does not mean you will not get a job if you take the same course. Just because someone has failed in a certain business does not mean you will also fail. Therefore, when embarking on whatever your hand has found to do, do not for a single moment think of failure or loss.

Believe that God has made you victorious before you begin doing any work. This belief will boost the level of quality of your work. People do mediocre work because they have allowed doubt to fill their minds. Many have the skill of writing, and God might have given them an idea of what to write, but they do not do it, or they do it reluctantly because they are unsure if the book will sell. Some have been given tremendous business ideas but fail to work on them, only to realize someone else has taken the same idea and succeeded in it.

Many people waste many hours at work scrolling through social media instead of working because they have fostered a negative perception. They think it is pointless to do their best because they believe no matter what they do, they will not be appreciated. Some might have been geared to think such thoughts because of interacting with people who are not diligent with their work or people who are constantly getting in trouble with their bosses because of a negative attitude and poor character.

Others have been called to do mission work in a certain area but have rejected the call because it is a strange land, and they fear the dangers that may befall them. Some will not keep the seventh day Sabbath even after they have read about it in the Bible and have been convicted by the Holy Spirit because they are afraid to lose their high-paying job. They fear failure instead of trusting in God, who has already given them victory.

1 Samuel 14:12-14 (KJV) – "[12] And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. [13] And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him. [14] And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow."

Jonathan had previously pictured two possible scenarios. One scenario was the Philistines not telling them to come up, and the other was the Philistines telling them to come up to them (1 Samuel 14:9-10). Both scenarios favored them. If the Philistines had not asked them to come up, they would have been relieved of the struggle of fighting against them but if they told them to come up, they would have to fight them. However, they would still win the battle because the Lord had assured them of victory. The closer you move to God and the further you move away from sin; you won't have to worry because all situations you will face (negative or positive) will favor you.

Romans 8:28 (KJV) – "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." All situations, whether good or bad, combine to work for good for those who love God.

John 14:15 (KJV) – "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." The Bible tells us that loving God is keeping His commandments. Therefore, all things will work together for good to those who keep God's commandments (those who love God).

If you acquire a chronic illness that makes you bedridden and causes you pain, that sickness is working for your good. If you are a genuine Christian and you lose your job or find no success in getting a job after graduating, those situations are working for your good. If you are unfairly charged guilty and locked up in prison, do not feel hopeless because that situation will turn out for your good.

Joseph received his breakthrough through the ministry he did behind the prison walls. He was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. He stayed inside those grim and austere, impenetrable

prison walls for 13 years. The prison experience was essential to prepare him for his position as Prime Minister.

“At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers. The psalmist says, “His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in chains of iron: until the time that his word came to pass; the Word of the Lord tried him.” Psalm 105:18, 19, R.V. But Joseph’s real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God. He did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of others. He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion.” – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 218.2, Ellen G. White.

In God’s government, it is either you win, or you win. When you cooperate with God, you can never lose. Even when you seem to have failed, you have not lost. Lot took the most fertile land and left the rest for Abraham (Genesis 13:10-11).

Abraham seemed to have lost. God gave Abraham the entire land, including what was Lot’s (Genesis 13:14-15). Later on, Sodom, the place that Lot chose, was destroyed by God. Therefore, Lot’s selfish ambition and pride made him lose. When you get mistreated or bullied by someone, while you are on the right, know that whoever has mistreated or bullied you is the one who has lost, not you. The same applies when you get rejected or underrated.

Daniel 3:16-18 (AMP) – “[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to answer you on this point. [17] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. [18] But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up!”

Daniel’s friends knew that God is faithful and they would be victorious whether God would save them from the fiery furnace or not. Faith is trusting God in whatever outcome He may bring.

Whether the results would be pleasant or unpleasant, faith is believing that God is always faithful no matter the circumstance. It is a blessing to suffer affliction when one is on God's side.

Matthew 5:11-12 (KJV) – "[11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Jesus tells those tortured and persecuted people to rejoice for God's sake. Being persecuted for Christ's sake brings greater rewards, especially to those who have overcome. Revelation 3:21 (KJV) – "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in His throne."

1 Samuel 14:15-16 (KJV) – "[15] And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling. [16] And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another."

There was a great trembling in the field. God is good (Psalm 100:5). However, His presence causes sinners to tremble. Hebrews 12:21 (KJV) – "And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." Moses was used to talking with God, but God's presence still caused him to fear. Sin causes one to fear. Righteousness makes one courageous. Proverbs 28:1 (KJV) – "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."

Therefore, the closer you move to God, the less fear you will have. The more you uphold and practice righteous principles, the more people will respect you. Deuteronomy 28:10 (KJV) – "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee." The people trembled when Jonathan and his armor bearer confronted them.

Jonathan's faith in God caused their enemies to be confused, making them beat one another. When one harbors doubt in their heart and lacks confidence in God, their judgment gets distorted. The more one drifts away from God, the more confused they become because God is not an author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

1 Samuel 14:21 (KJV) – “Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan.”

The Hebrews, who were previously with the Philistines, joined the Israelites. When God favors you, He makes even those who had left you return because nobody wants to be on the losing side. Proverbs 16:7 (KJV) – “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” In Hebrews 11:6, God promises rewards to those who please Him by faith. One of those rewards is making your enemies to be at peace with you.

1 Samuel 14:27 (KJV) – “But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.”

Saul had proclaimed a curse on anyone who would eat or taste anything. However, when Jonathan tasted that honey, his energy was restored. Jonathan tasted that honey because he was absent when his father issued that decree. Wherever he might have been when his father proclaimed that curse was the right place since he was serving God there.

The people were deprived of energy because they did not eat anything. Their lack of eating resulted from taking heed to a man who was once Godly but was drifting away from God. They lacked energy because of following ungodly advice. Psalm 1:1 (KJV) – “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” Jonathan did not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, even though the counsel was coming from his father. Therefore, he was blessed as his energy was restored. The other Israelites walked in Saul’s counsel, and as a result, they lacked sufficient power.

The question is, who was Saul? Saul was the king of Israel. Ungodly advice that influences a great multitude usually comes from people with lofty positions of authority in society. However, such advice results in dire consequences. Many have suffered because of subscribing to the wrong advice from people who are seen to be highly educated and rich. Ephesians 6:1 (KJV) – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” God had not instructed Saul to issue the decree he had given to the people. Therefore, disobeying it would bring no curse. The Bible says in Proverbs 26:2 (KJV) – “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.” Saul’s curse was causeless.

Jonathan did not hear when his father put the people under oath. Being in the right place gives one fabulous blessings. The right place is not always where most people are or where the most money is. It is where God has commanded you to be. God might be telling you to leave your job and serve Him, but you are tightly holding on to it because it gives you 'security' by paying you a lot of money.

God might be telling you to change your diet and stop eating unhealthy food, but you continue eating them because they are tasty. Daniel and his friends rejected the king's meat and his wine. They refused the 'best' food in the land. "The best that the world has to offer is not good enough for God's children." – Pastor Randy Skeete.

You might have read the Bible when it says numerous times that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but you do not follow it because the majority of the Christian world does not keep the Sabbath holy. Jonathan's energy was restored after he tasted the honey. He received a blessing that the other Israelites did not receive by having his energy restored because of heeding God's commandment. The rest of the population heeded Saul's commandment.

God might have given you a lucrative idea to make more money, but a respectable top religious leader tells you that it is against God's will to make a lot of money and that you should only make enough for yourself and your family. This advice seems right and sounds right, but it is not right. Myron Golden says, "It is a selfish ambition to desire to make money that is just enough for you." We are created to be a blessing. Genuine Christians should aim to make more so that they can help more. Secondly, serving more people with your business is a righteous act and it results in more money.

1 Samuel 14:29 (KJV) – "Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey."

"Honey of God's Providing — This rash oath of Saul's was a human invention. It was not inspired of God, and God was displeased with it. Jonathan and his armor-bearer, who, through God, had wrought deliverance for Israel that day, had become weak through hunger. The people also were weary and hungry."- SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 2, Page 1015.7, Ellen G. White.

"And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground." This honey was of God's own providing. He desired that the armies of Israel should partake of this food, and

receive strength. But Saul, who was not under the direction of God, had interposed his rash oath." – The Youth's Instructor, December 1, 1898, Ellen G. White.

"Man-invented Tests Dishonor God—There are many who will lightly regard the tests which God has given, and will assume the responsibility of creating tests and prohibitions, as did Saul, which bring dishonor to God and evil to men." – The Signs of the Times, June 1, 1888, Ellen G. White.

Jonathan did not fear to tell the people the truth. He said to them that his father had troubled the land. He knew his father was wrong and chose not to withhold what was good from the people by telling them the truth. Some people know that doing a certain traditional practice is wrong but keep doing it because their parents and relatives do it. Jonathan's eyes were enlightened because he tasted a little bit of that honey. How much better would it have been for him if he had tasted a little more?

A small act of faith in God gives one bigger blessings than they had expected. Just by the small righteous act of allowing Lot to choose first the land that he wanted, God ended up giving Abraham the entire land. If God can bestow magnanimous blessings on such a small act, how much more would God do for you when your life's practices are inseparable from righteousness?

Jonathan was one out of thousands or millions of Israelites who had his energy restored and his eyes enlightened from tasting that honey. It would have been much better if all the Israelites had tasted that honey. Very few people are blessed to astonishing levels because very few people follow God's commandments to the letter. I have heard numerous times Christians saying that the Bible should not be fully obeyed. I have heard various people saying, "You know there is Christianity, and there is reality." To them, Christianity is not reality.

God's Word will show its work in full power if you allow it to lead your life. God's Word has not proved its full potential in the lives of various people because people do not want to apply it. They only want to obey the principles that are favorable to them. We would have a world close to heaven if we all obeyed God fully. The environment would not be polluted. There would be minimal or no unemployment, crime would be absent, and poverty and diseases would not be there. It is possible to have a society where no one is sick or poor. No one lacked in the early church.

The Bible says in Acts 4:33-34 (KJV) – "33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among

them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold."

1 Samuel 14:30 (AMP) – "How much better [it would have been] if only the people had eaten freely today from the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great."

Jonathan said the battle against the Philistines was victorious, but the victory would have been greater if they had eaten the honey. We may have attained slight success in our endeavors, but we would achieve greater success if we fully obeyed God's commands.

1 Samuel 14:45 (AMP) – "But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan, who has brought about this great victory in Israel, be put to death? Far from it! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So, the people rescued Jonathan and he was not put to death."

The people did not want Jonathan to die because he brought a great victory to Israel. Jonathan walked with God. When you walk and work with God, He prevents you from harm. Psalm 23:1 (KJV) – "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 91:1 (KJV) – "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the almighty." The people rescued Jonathan. When you are in the habit of blessing people, they will look for ways to bless you back.

1 Samuel 18:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. [2] And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. [3] Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. [4] And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

Mark 12:31 (AMP) – "You shall [unselfishly] love your neighbor as yourself." Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. Jonathan stripped the armor he was wearing and gave it to David. It is an act of faith to help others, especially when we do it sacrificially. Hebrews 13:16 (NKJV) – "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

If we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, we would fast and pray for them the way we fast and pray for ourselves. If we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, we would invite them to church. If we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, we will share with them the good knowledge we have acquired and present opportunities that come our way to them.

“The worshiper of God will find that he cannot cherish one fiber of the root of selfishness. He cannot do his duty to his God and practice oppression toward his fellow men. The second principle of the law is like unto the first, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” “This do and thou shalt live.” These are the words of Jesus Christ from which there can be no departure on the part of any man, woman, or youth who would be a true Christian. It is obedience to the principles of the commandments of God that molds the character after the divine similitude.” – Children of God, Page 52, Ellen G. White.

“To leave a suffering neighbor unrelieved is a breach of the law of God…. He who loves God will not only love his fellow men, but will regard with tender compassion the creatures which God has made. When the Spirit of God is in man it leads him to relieve rather than to create suffering…. We are to care for every case of suffering, and to look upon ourselves as God’s agents to relieve the needy to the very uttermost of our ability. We are to be laborers together with God. There are some who manifest great affection for their relatives, for their friends and favorites, who yet fail to be kind and considerate to those who need tender sympathy, who need kindness and love. With earnest heart, let us inquire, who is my neighbor? Our neighbors are not merely our neighbors and special friends, are not simply those who belong to our church or who think as we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family. We are to do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We are to give to the world an exhibition of what it means to carry out the law of God. We are to love God supremely and our neighbors as ourselves.” – Sons and Daughters of God, Page 52, Ellen G. White.

1 Samuel 19:1-4 (KJV) – “[1] And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. [2] But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: [3] And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. [4] And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let

not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good."

Jonathan honored his father, but he glorified God more, which is why He did not kill David when he was instructed by his father to do so. Many of us would intentionally sin because we have esteemed our parents or relatives more than we have esteemed God. There are many instances where people have left their marriages because their parents have advised them to do so.

It is not unusual to see parents advising their son to leave his wife because she is not giving birth. It is common to see a parent advising their daughter to exit an engagement because the man has no money or to leave a marriage because he has lost his job. The wrong advice is like an opposing wave to a sailing ship; follow it, and you are assured of sinking.

1 Samuel 20:32-34 (KJV) – "[32] And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? What hath he done? [33] And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. [34] So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame."

Jonathan did not eat because of his love for David. He could not allow anyone to do injustice to David. This passage highlights the strong bond between Jonathan and David. It underscores the theme of friendship, loyalty, and the moral character of these biblical figures. Jonathan's actions in this context demonstrate his love and commitment to justice and his friend David.

2 Samuel 9:6-13 (AMP) – "[6] Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David and fell face down and lay himself down [in respect]. David said, "Mephibosheth." And he answered, "Here is your servant!" [7] David said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will certainly show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall always eat at my table." [8] Again Mephibosheth lay himself face down and said, "What is your servant, that you would be concerned for a dead dog like me?" [9] Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and to all his house (family). [10] You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce, so that your master's grandson may have food to eat; but Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, shall always

eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. [11] Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do according to everything that my lord the king commands." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. [12] Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house were servants to Mephibosheth. [13] So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. And he was lame in both feet."

"One of the first acts of the new-crowned monarch was to express his tender regard for the memory of Saul and Jonathan. Upon learning of the brave deed of the men of Jabesh-gilead in rescuing the bodies of the fallen leaders and giving them honorable burial, David sent an embassy to Jabesh with the message, "Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your Lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will require you this kindness." And he announced his own accession to the throne of Judah and invited the allegiance of those who had proved themselves so truehearted." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 697.4, Ellen G. White.

"David, in his covenant with Jonathan, had promised that when he should have rest from his enemies he would show kindness to the house of Saul. In his prosperity, mindful of this covenant, the king made inquiry, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" He was told of a son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth, who had been lame from childhood. At the time of Saul's defeat by the Philistines at Jezreel, the nurse of this child, attempting to flee with him, had let him fall, thus making him a lifelong cripple. David now summoned the young man to court and received him with great kindness. The private possessions of Saul were restored to him for the support of his household; but the son of Jonathan was himself to be the constant guest of the king, sitting daily at the royal table. Through reports from the enemies of David, Mephibosheth had been led to cherish a strong prejudice against him as a usurper; but the monarch's generous and courteous reception of him and his continued kindness won the heart of the young man; he became strongly attached to David, and, like his father Jonathan, he felt that his interest was one with that of the king whom God had chosen." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 713.1, Ellen G. White.

David rewarded Mephibosheth Jonathan's son. God will always reward you for every good thing that you do. You will receive certain rewards immediately, while some you will receive after a few

years, and others will be received by your children or future generations. Every action of faith is like a seed sown; it may not grow today or tomorrow, but it will surely grow.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to be loyal to people and help me love them as I love myself. Help me to have you as my first priority. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

- Think of occasions where people have been good to you and write them down.
- Write down the list of the people close to you and prayerfully find out ways on how you can benefit them.

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CHAPTER 62

THE FAITH OF HANNAH

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Hannah prayed till the High Priest thought she was mad,

Eli misunderstood her because of how she prayed so hard,

Hannah prayed and had faith in God's Word,

God takes care of everyone, as He does for every animal and bird.

Hannah did not even tell Eli what she was praying for,

She persisted in prayer, like a soldier in a waging war,

She did not accept defeat, she did not let God go,

The faith of Hannah grabbed heaven's attention tighter than a lion's paw.

Hannah was laughed at and mocked, but she did not lose hope,

She did not lose faith in God, loving Him she did not stop,

She did not stop, and finally, God placed her on top,

By giving her a child who gave the hopeless hope.

Hannah's cry was answered, God answers prayer,

She did not withhold her son; the gift of God she did share,

God might seem silent, but He is always there,

He has your back even though your current situation seems unfair.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:"

Hebrews 11:32 mentions Samuel. Who was Samuel? Samuel was the firstborn child of Hannah. Samuel was not only Hannah's son but also an answered prayer to his mother. The name Hannah means favor. Hannah's story in the Bible is not as long as that of her son Samuel and other heroes of faith, but her faith has profound applicable lessons. If we apply these lessons, we shall surely please God and receive great rewards.

1 Samuel 1:1-6 (KJV) – "[1] Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: [2] And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. [3] And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. [4] And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: [5] But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the Lord had shut up her womb. [6] And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb."

"Elkanah, a Levite of Mount Ephraim, was a man of wealth and influence, and one who loved and feared the Lord. His wife, Hannah, was a woman of fervent piety. Gentle and unassuming, her character was marked with deep earnestness and a lofty faith." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 569.1, Ellen G. White.

"The blessing so earnestly sought by every Hebrew was denied this godly pair; their home was not gladdened by the voice of childhood; and the desire to perpetuate his name led the husband—as it had led many others—to contract a second marriage. But this step, prompted by a lack of faith in God, did not bring happiness. Sons and daughters were added to the household; but the joy and beauty of God's sacred institution had been marred and the peace of the family was broken.

Peninnah, the new wife, was jealous and narrow-minded, and she bore herself with pride and insolence. To Hannah, hope seemed crushed and life a weary burden; yet she met the trial with uncomplaining meekness." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 569.2, Ellen G. White.

Hannah was the wife to Elkanah, who also had another wife called Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not have children. Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninnah, even though she did not have children. It was like how Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah, even though Rachel had no child for a long time. God shut up Hannah's womb for reasons that God knows best. Hannah's lack of children made Peninnah mock and provoke her greatly.

Peninnah did not realize that no situation was cast in stone, and she did not know what the future had in store for Hannah. Some people may laugh at you now or treat you with contempt because they do not know what God has in store for you. No child of Peninnah is mentioned in the Bible or the pages of history because they probably did not do anything significant, but we all know who the son of Hannah was. The son of Hannah was a prophet, priest, and judge, and all generations have read his story.

1 Samuel 1:7-8 (KJV) – "[7] And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. [8] Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?"

Instead of repaying evil with evil, Hannah revolted with a powerful method of handling all that mockery from Peninnah. When mocked or insulted, most Christians and non-Christians repay their adversaries by mocking or verbally abusing them. Some will even try to fight them physically. Hannah solved this with prayer.

1 Peter 3:9 (AMPC) – "Never return evil for evil or insult for insult (scolding, tongue-lashing, berating), but on the contrary blessing [praying for their welfare, happiness, and protection, and truly pitying and loving them]. For know that to this you have been called, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing [from God—that you may obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection]."

One way of repaying evil with good is by praying. When you repay evil with evil, you give the enemy more power and strength to afflict you. While insulting the person who has mocked you,

your anger may make you tell them words that may end up cursing your own life since words have the power to bless and curse. You may physically harm them, and then you end up in jail.

John 10:10 (KJV) – "For the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."

One thing that Satan loves to steal from you is peace. He knows your mind will not think clearly and correctly if he robs you of your peace. Therefore, you will not be as productive as you ought to be.

Secondly, the Devil wants to steal your liberty, so that you do not carry out God's will. He takes away your freedom by sending people to ridicule you or gossip you in an effort to discourage you. Sometimes, he sends such people to the church you are worshipping so that you can stop going to church. He knows that once you keep a distance from the church, you will move far away from God, and your life will keep sinking.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (KJV) – "[12] Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. [13] Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: [14] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. [15] And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

Deuteronomy 5:15 reminds the Israelites how they were enslaved people in Egypt. It reminds them of how God took them out of slavery by His mighty power. The Bible gives us instructions on how to maintain this freedom. The command to maintain the freedom in Deuteronomy 5:15 is to keep the Sabbath day holy. Keeping the Sabbath day holy gives us freedom. In other words, keeping all God's commandments provides us freedom. Satan can only steal our freedom if we disobey God.

Hannah did not allow Peninnah's mockery to pull her away from God. By faith, she used that opportunity to get close to God. The more Peninnah provoked her, the more she prayed. Words meant to make you lose trust in God should not make you lose faith in God. Eve believed that she would not die if she ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because the Devil had told her that lie.

You should not believe any other word besides God's Word. The reason is that God's Word has evidence through creation. Other people's words (not in line with God's Word) have no evidence of creating anything since nobody can create except God. God's Word said, "Let there be light, and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

In other words, God's Word has proved its success. Satan's words have never confirmed their success. When provoked or persecuted, we should rejoice (Matthew 5:10-12) and use that opportunity to get close to God. The closer we move to God, the more successful we will be because God's Word has proved its success by calling the entire creation into existence.

1 Samuel 1:9-11 (KJV) – "[9] So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. [10] And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. [11] And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

As Hannah prayed for God to give her a child, she made a promise to God. She promised God that if He gave her a child, she would give him unto the Lord all the days of his life. God answers prayers, and we do not have to promise Him anything to answer our prayers or bless us. However, our prayers can be more effective and will be a tremendous blessing if we attach the prayers with a promise.

For example, Hannah promised God that if He gave her a child, she would give the child to God's service. This promise would benefit Hannah more than God. First, if she gave her child to God's service, her child would grow in the ways of the Lord, and he would be morally upright.

Secondly, her child would cause the family to have more blessings if he worked for God. Thirdly, it would give her peace. Many parents today, particularly mothers, pray for their children to follow God's ways. Therefore, giving her child to God would provide Samuel's mother peace and joy.

1 Samuel 1:12-16 (KJV) – "[12] And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. [13] Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. [14] And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. [15] And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I

am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. [16] Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto."

"Hannah uttered no reproach. The burden which she could share with no earthly friend she cast upon God. Earnestly she pleaded that He would take away her reproach and grant her the precious gift of a son to nurture and train for Him. And she made a solemn vow that if her request were granted, she would dedicate her child to God, even from its birth. Hannah had drawn near to the entrance of the tabernacle, and in the anguish of her spirit she "prayed, … and wept sore." Yet she communed with God in silence, uttering no sound. In those evil times such scenes of worship were rarely witnessed. Irreverent feasting and even drunkenness were not uncommon, even at the religious festivals; and Eli the high priest, observing Hannah, supposed that she was overcome with wine. Thinking to administer a deserved rebuke, he said sternly, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 570.1, Ellen G. White.

"Pained and startled, Hannah answered gently, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 570.2, Ellen G. White.

Hannah prayed passionately and earnestly until Eli, the High Priest, thought she was drunk. Most Christians pray to fulfill a requirement, and they only do it with earnestness once they face a problem. Some of us, when we are praying, we do not pray from the heart.

During our private prayers, we have specific words which we usually mention daily that do not come from the heart. It is like reciting something you have crammed in your head, uttering it with little conviction. When we are called upon to pray in public, we try to be highly eloquent, sometimes mentioning Bible verses in the prayer, but the prayers do not come from the heart.

Hannah prayed from her heart. While she was praying, she did not care who was around her or who was watching her. She was heavily afflicted and needed God to uplift her from her barren condition. Therefore, she prayed till Eli thought she was drunk.

When Eli told her to stop drinking, she did not answer Eli rudely. She told him politely that she was not drunk; she was pouring her soul to God. Sometimes, we get misunderstood. As Christians,

when someone misunderstands us and says something to show that they have misunderstood us, we should not get angry at them or try to harm them. We should politely talk to them like Hannah did.

1 Samuel 1:17-18 (KJV) – "[17] Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him. [18] And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

Eli told Hannah to go in peace and prayed that God may grant her petition. If Hannah had answered Eli rudely, Eli would have been angry at her and maybe cursed her. His curse would probably have been severe because he was a high priest.

Many people have brought curses upon themselves by talking rudely or insulting men of God. A perfect example is the forty-two boys a bear devoured because of laughing at Elisha's bald head (2 Kings 2:23-24). After praying and after the encounter with Eli, Hannah went away, and she received a blessing in that she was never sad despite her situation of not having children.

A non-believer can be more afflicted with a problem that is similar or of less magnitude to the problem a faithful Christian is facing. Genuine Christians can be facing a plethora of issues, but they are always happy because they have faith and are being comforted by God's love and grace.

1 Samuel 1:19-20 (KJV) – "[19] And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. [20] Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

"Hannah's prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—"asked of God." As soon as the little one was old enough to be separated from his mother, she fulfilled her vow. She loved her child with all the devotion of a mother's heart; day by day, as she watched his expanding powers and listened to his childish prattle, her affections entwined about him more closely. He was her only son, the special gift of Heaven; but she had received him as a treasure consecrated to God, and she would not withhold from the Giver His own." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 570.4, Ellen G. White.

After a long time of earnest prayers, Hannah's prayers were answered, and she bore a son and named him Samuel. According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Samuel means God has heard.

Some of us may pray for a long time to get something, but after we get that thing, we fail to acknowledge that it is God who has given us. Many people credit their hard work or broad connections but forget to acknowledge God. God answered Hannah's prayers and gave her a child. By faith, Hannah named her child Samuel to recognize God's power.

"From Shiloh, Hannah quietly returned to her home at Ramah, leaving the child Samuel to be trained for service in the house of God, under the instruction of the high priest. From the earliest dawn of intellect she had taught her son to love and reverence God and to regard himself as the Lord's. By every familiar object surrounding him she had sought to lead his thoughts up to the Creator. When separated from her child, the faithful mother's solicitude did not cease. Every day he was the subject of her prayers. Every year she made, with her own hands, a robe of service for him; and as she went up with her husband to worship at Shiloh, she gave the child this reminder of her love. Every fiber of the little garment had been woven with a prayer that he might be pure, noble, and true. She did not ask for her son worldly greatness, but she earnestly pleaded that he might attain that greatness which Heaven values—that he might honor God and bless his fellow men." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 572.2, Ellen G. White.

1 Samuel 1:23-28 (KJV) – "[23] And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish His Word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. [24] And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young. [25] And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. [26] And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. [27] For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: [28] Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there."

"What a reward was Hannah's! And what an encouragement to faithfulness is her example! There are opportunities of inestimable worth, interests infinitely precious, committed to every mother. The humble round of duties which women have come to regard as a wearisome task should be

looked upon as a grand and noble work. It is the mother's privilege to bless the world by her influence, and in doing this she will bring joy to her own heart. She may make straight paths for the feet of her children, through sunshine and shadow, to the glorious heights above. But it is only when she seeks, in her own life, to follow the teachings of Christ that the mother can hope to form the character of her children after the divine pattern. The world teems with corrupting influences. Fashion and custom exert a strong power over the young. If the mother fails in her duty to instruct, guide, and restrain, her children will naturally accept the evil, and turn from the good. Let every mother go often to her Saviour with the prayer, "Teach us, how shall we order the child, and what shall we do unto him?" Let her heed the instruction which God has given in His Word, and wisdom will be given her as she shall have need." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 572.3, Ellen G. White.

Hannah not only gave thanks to God through prayer and the naming of her child. She also gave thanks to God by providing the child to God to do His work. It is a profound blessing to children and parents when parents encourage their children to serve God and worship Him.

Hannah showed faith when she fulfilled the promise that she had given God. Many people promise God things when they want the Lord to answer their prayers but forget to fulfill them once they have received those blessings.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 (NKJV) – "[4] When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— [5] Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. [6] Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?"

We should not play games with God by promising Him something we fail to fulfill. When we fulfill our promises to God, He trusts us, and as a result, He gives us more blessings. How do we expect God to provide us with more benefits when we have failed to fulfill the promise that we made to Him before the blessing we now possess?

1 Samuel 2:18-21 (KJV) – "[18] But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. [19] Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20] And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the

Lord. And they went unto their own home. [21] And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord."

Usually, mothers are so close to their children because they spend more time with them. Samuel's mother, Hannah, did not hesitate to give her child to God at a very young age. She loved her child dearly, and she had prayed for a long time to get that child.

Nevertheless, her love for her son did not stop her from giving her child to God. She gave her child to Eli to do God's work full time and only visited him once a year with her husband when they came to offer the yearly sacrifice. She understood that her son was safer in God's hands than in hers.

Often, parents trust themselves with their children more than they trust God with their little ones. They do not know that God loves their children more than them and He can take better care of them since God is omnipotent. A parent may be facing a challenging financial situation, and they may be unable to provide for the child's basic needs as they would want. God never has harsh economic conditions because He is the Creator of finances.

God can provide for your child even if a parent is absent from the child's life. Some orphaned children left by their parents when they were very young have proved this point true when God provided for them, in that they never lacked since their parents left them and have excelled in life.

Hannah entrusted her child to God, and God blessed her with five more children, three more sons and two daughters. Her faith was rewarded beyond her expectations. As she prayed to God before she got Samuel, she never knew that God would bless her with more than one child. She was expecting God to bless her with just one child.

As Samuel's mother promised God that she would lend her child to God, she made that promise, knowing that she would probably not have another child. Therefore, she knew that giving her child to God would mean giving all that she had to God. Some may consider this promise a desperate, empty one and think that the one promising this would not fulfill it once they got the blessing.

Many people make empty promises, but Hannah is different. After she got Samuel, she weaned him for some time, and then she fulfilled her promise of giving her child to God to do His work. God was pleased with this.

What does God do when He is pleased?

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Those who approach God with faith God rewards them. God rewarded Hannah mightily. He caused his son to be a great man in Israel, a prophet, priest, and judge. Hannah probably did not expect her child to be that great. Secondly, God gave Hannah other children that she did not expect.

Hannah prayed and praised God because of what God had done for her. The praises she gave to God are found in the following verses:

1 Samuel 2:1-10 (KJV) – "[1] And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. [2] There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. [3] Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. [4] The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. [5] They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. [6] The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. [7] The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. [8] He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them. [9] He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. [10] The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."

Hannah praised God because she proved that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. Many people blame God because they have chosen to do things their own way instead of following God's way.

Today, before writing this section, I witnessed something that can offer a perfect example. A particular lady was heading somewhere. She came to my area of residence and told the guards that

she wanted to pass through as a shortcut to where she was going. The men at the gate told her there was no throughway via the gated area. She insisted that there was a way.

The guards saw her stubbornness and allowed her to have her way. She went only to come back frustrated because she saw no way. Instead of seeing her mistake and blaming herself, she insulted the guards.

God has clearly shown us where to go if we want blessings. However, we insist on going in the opposite direction. Since He cannot force us, He allows us to choose how we want to go (Deuteronomy 30:19). Unfortunately, we follow the wrong way and encounter problems. Instead of blaming ourselves, we blame God.

If we believe in God like Hannah, we will praise God and not blame Him. God wants to bless us more than we have ever imagined, so He wants us to have faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for all those blessings you have bestowed upon me. Please help me never make a promise that I cannot fulfill and to fulfill all the promises I have made as Hannah did. Help me follow your way always. Please help me to move closer to you even when people mock me or laugh at my situation. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

Are you praying for something so earnestly? As you pray for it, attach a promise to it, and fulfill it once God has answered your prayers.

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CHAPTER 63

THE FAITH OF SAMUEL

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Samuel served God ever since he was young,

Samuel loved God, and on His promises, he hung,

A faithful messenger, always had God's Word on his tongue,

In God's grace and mercy, His praises he sung.

Samuel was a judge, priest, and prophet, his work was quite heavy,

His responsibility was demanding, like being in the Marines and Navy,

Samuel was a pillar of strength when the people felt weary,

Samuel's faith and resolve, a beacon so fiery.

Samuel was the son of Elkanah and his wife Hannah,

He served God full-time from summer to summer,

Peninah had laughed at Samuel's mother, causing her drama,

God visited Hannah at the right time, making her faith firmer.

Samuel, one of the Bible's most remarkable example,

Did whatever God told him with a heart that is humble,

He believed in truth; with evil, he did not gamble,

His legacy, a shining, sacred emblem.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Time might not have been enough for the writer of Hebrews 11 to talk in detail about the faith of Samuel. Samuel did numerous faithful deeds, some of which may not have been written in the Bible. He was a prophet, priest, and judge. In Samuel's days, there was no king in Israel. Judges would stand in the place of kings. Samuel was the equivalent of a king. He is the only person in the Bible to occupy those three positions simultaneously of prophet, priest, and judge besides Jesus Christ. He was faithful to God in the positions God gave him since childhood.

1 Samuel 1:19-20 (KJV) – "[19] And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. [20] Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

Samuel was the son of Hannah and Elkanah. The name Elkanah means God has obtained or God has possessed. The name Hannah means favored, and the name Samuel means God has heard. They were from the tribe of Ephraim; therefore, they were Ephrathites. Ephrathite means fruitfulness. Despite not having a child and being ridiculed, Hannah's name meant favor. Sometimes, life's rough situations can make you forget that you are a blessed person. When faced with life's twists and turns, it is easy for you to believe that you are doomed in your current situation. It is easy for you to see no hope for light at the end of the tunnel or for dawn after the darkest hour. It might have puzzled Hannah that she could not get children while her name meant favor.

God has blessed us all even before we were born. God told Jeremiah that He knew him and ordained him to be a prophet to the nations before Jeremiah was formed in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). This shows us that Jeremiah was blessed before he was born. God is not a respecter

of people. Jeremiah had done nothing for God to be ordained as a prophet who would minister to people worldwide. It was all by grace. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that God blessed us before we were born, as He blessed Jeremiah.

No life situation should make us forget that we are already blessed. In Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV), the Bible says, "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The Sabbath day should remind us that God is the Creator of everything since He created the entire world, including us, and blessed everything He created before resting on the Sabbath. God the Creator is also the originator of blessings. He is the originator of every good thing. Therefore, as we remember the Sabbath day, we should remember that we are already blessed. Hannah proved this when God gave her Samuel. Hannah gave Samuel to Eli to carry out God's service when he was young. Therefore, Samuel's faith was cultivated from childhood.

1 Samuel 2:18-21 (KJV) – "[18] But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. [19] Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20] And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. [21] And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord."

"It was not customary for the Levites to enter upon their peculiar services until they were twenty-five years of age, but Samuel had been an exception to this rule. Every year saw more important trusts committed to him; and while he was yet a child, a linen ephod was placed upon him as a token of his consecration to the work of the sanctuary. Young as he was when brought to minister in the tabernacle, Samuel had even then duties to perform in the service of God, according to his capacity. These were at first very humble, and not always pleasant; but they were performed to the best of his ability, and with a willing heart. His religion was carried into every duty of life. He regarded himself as God's servant, and his work as God's work. His efforts were accepted, because

they were prompted by love to God and a sincere desire to do His will. It was thus that Samuel became a co-worker with the Lord of heaven and earth. And God fitted him to accomplish a great work for Israel." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 573.3, Ellen G. White.

Samuel ministered before the Lord from his childhood days. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "Children should not be childish." He also says, "Children understand more than we think they do." Do not wait for a child to grow to an age that you think he can understand and make sound decisions for you to tell them about God. Do not wait for them to be mature enough to encourage them to do God's service.

Ellen G. White urges parents to start cultivating the proper habits of their children right from the womb because life starts in the womb. She advises mothers to be intentional about healthy lifestyles and eating healthy foods while pregnant.

Parents should be fervent in prayer and Bible study at all times, before and after the baby is born. As the minds of the mother and father are fixated upon Jesus Christ, the baby's mind will also be aligned with God while it is still being formed in the womb. Samuel ministered to God from childhood.

The Bible says that Samuel wore a linen ephod. In those days, Priests wore a linen ephod. Even though Samuel was a child, he dressed like a priest. We should teach our children the proper dressing practices from a tender age. This should start with the parent leading by example because children learn more from what you do than what you say.

Some parents do not show much seriousness in their children's outfits and general grooming because, according to them, they are 'just kids.' Some want their children to compete with others on the latest fashion trends, caring less about the harm that such competition may bring to the child. Samuel dressed like a priest as a young boy and accompanied his dressing with the service he did for God. The faith of Samuel was strong as an adult because it was activated right from the beginning.

Some parents' care' too much for their children to send them to Christian camps. Some do not want their teenage or youthful girls to participate in youth activities in the church because they fear the young men might prey on them. They want their children to always be under their

supervision and cannot allow them to participate in a church activity when they are not in their presence.

Some parents fear that if they send their young ones to Christian campouts, they may contract illnesses. While it is good for parents to care, we should understand that God loves and cares for our children more than we do. One may try to prevent them from going to camps so they do not get sick, but they end up getting sick at home. One may prevent them from participating in church activities so that they do not socialize with the opposite gender, but they may end up having sexual relations with people of the same gender.

We should do our best to take care of our children and trust in God to protect them where we cannot protect them. One way to trust God to protect your children is by involving them in church activities. Samuel was not yet an adult when his mother decided to give him to God's service. Even though his mother had prayed to get a child for years, she did not hesitate to send her child away to do God's work. Hannah and Elkanah loved Samuel, so they visited him once a year to give him a little coat when they offered the yearly sacrifice.

Samuel never went home. Instead, his parents visited him in church. His parents understood that Samuel was safe in God's hands more than he was in their own hands. The average parent cannot physically lift/carry their children beyond the age of eight because their children are physically heavy. God can physically carry anybody, no matter how heavy they are. He has the whole world in His hands. So, why not trust in Him? And believe that He can take care of your kids better than you.

Eli noted the sacrifice that Samuel's parents had made. When Elkanah and Hannah gave Samuel to Eli to do God's service, they probably felt the pain of not having their child at home as any parent would feel. However, they placed their faith above emotions.

Psalm 126:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. [6] He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Sacrificing for God is like investing; it is not always pleasant but has tremendous rewards. Investing your money to buy stocks, real estate, or any other lucrative venture is not always pleasant. This is because you have sacrificed certain pleasures like buying your dream vehicle, purchasing expensive fashionable clothes, or eating at highly priced restaurants. You often do not

get the returns immediately after you have invested. You have to wait patiently to get the desired returns, but you realize the investment was worth it after you have gotten them.

When you invest your time in reading, researching, building a product, writing a book, or any other helpful endeavor, you may feel sad and blue that you are missing out on watching your favorite television show or movie. You may feel unhappy that sometimes you cannot find time to hang out with friends as you would love to. Do not despair. The time you have invested in doing something productive will one day come to fruition, and you will reap great rewards.

Samuel's parents sacrificed the comfort of having their child at home and gave him to serve God. Eli saw this sacrifice and was pleased. He proclaimed a blessing to them. Through the power of God, they were able to get five more children. Nothing you give to God will go unrewarded.

1 Samuel 2:26 (KJV) – "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."

"The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." Though Samuel's youth was passed at the tabernacle devoted to the worship of God, he was not free from evil influences or sinful example. The sons of Eli feared not God, nor honored their father; but Samuel did not seek their company nor follow their evil ways. It was his constant endeavor to become what God would have him. This is the privilege of every youth. God is pleased when even little children give themselves to His service." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 573.1, Ellen G. White.

"Samuel had been placed under the care of Eli, and the loveliness of his character drew forth the warm affection of the aged priest. He was kind, generous, obedient, and respectful. Eli, pained by the waywardness of his own sons, found rest and comfort and blessing in the presence of his charge. Samuel was helpful and affectionate, and no father ever loved his child more tenderly than did Eli this youth. It was a singular thing that between the chief magistrate of the nation and the simple child so warm an affection should exist. As the infirmities of age came upon Eli, and he was filled with anxiety and remorse by the profligate course of his own sons, he turned to Samuel for comfort." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 573.2, Ellen G. White.

Samuel's character had a great ministry on Eli. He was kind, generous, obedient, and respectful to him. Eli, hurt by his children's waywardness found comfort in the young Samuel. Eli loved Samuel so tenderly than most biological fathers would love their children.

That is the beauty of ministering to God. You meet people who do a great deal of work in taking away your sorrows. If Eli were not a priest, the stress in his home would drain him, but his priestly duties made him find comfort because Samuel would be a blessing to him. This text shows us that we need to be kind to people because we do not know the struggles with which they are dealing.

When you move by faith, you will be favored by God and men. Proverbs 21:1 (KJV) – "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." When you make it your daily mission to be faithful to God, using your talents and time to enrich others, God will favor you greatly. Once He favors you, He will cause people to favor you. This does not mean that everybody will like you, but people who are meant to like you and are specially aligned on your path to fulfill your purpose will like you.

Many people did not like Jesus, but His disciples liked Him, who were instrumental in helping Him spread the gospel. Some people did not like Daniel and his friends, but the prince of the eunuchs liked them (Daniel 1:9). Daniel was not liked by the other presidents and princes (Daniel 6:4), but he was liked by King Darius (Daniel 6:3).

Other people in Egypt may not have liked Joseph, but he was liked by Potiphar (Genesis 39:4). After Joseph was thrown in prison, all the prisoners may not have liked him but God gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison (Genesis 39:21).

In his YouTube Channel, Abel Mutua talks about how he got his show *Hapa Kule News* (a Kenyan slang comical news show) to be aired on Television. He said he approached Kenya Television Network with the idea, and together with his crew, they sat in the boardroom with decision makers of that television station to pitch that idea. He said everyone in that boardroom rejected that idea, and only the Managing Director accepted it. Since the Managing Director who was in charge of the station accepted it, the show was approved.

God can make your enemies like you (Proverbs 16:7). He can make kings and presidents like you. Samuel's faith made him favored by God and his fellow men.

1 Samuel 3:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. [10] And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Samuel showed faith by obeying the instructions of Eli, the High Priest. He understood that he was under Eli's mentorship and willingly carried out the Godly instructions that Eli gave him. Samuel was new to God's service. There were some spiritual mysteries that Eli understood that he did not understand. He had never heard God's voice before.

When God called him, he thought that it was Eli who was calling him. After going to Eli three times to confirm if he was calling him, Eli realized that God was calling him because he had more spiritual insight than Samuel at that time.

Even though Samuel was serving in church, he had not known God yet, and God's Word was unfamiliar to him (Samuel 3:7). Many people serve zealously in church but are unfamiliar with God and His Word. It should be our duty to minister to them. Unfortunately, some are unwilling to yield to God's instructions.

Samuel was different. When Eli told him that God was calling him and instructed him on how to answer, Samuel did precisely that. We do a lot of injustice to our mentors when we fail to follow the Godly instructions that they give us. By lack of obedience, we put them in a position that can be likened to pulling a cart with no wheels stuck in mad. It is like leading a donkey or a horse to travel in one direction, and then they go in the opposite direction.

Samuel made God's work easier by heeding the Godly instructions God had given him through Eli. When you have faith and obey God, you will indeed move forward. When you do not, you will stagnate or move backward.

If Samuel had not responded to God as Eli had told him, God would probably not have spoken and told him what He told him. God had a message for Eli and used Samuel to deliver that message. The message would not have been delivered if Samuel did not obey God. It is like trying to send an email with no internet connection or the mailman refusing to deliver the mail. God wants us to obey His instructions at this step to proceed to the next step.

Once you have successfully gotten on top of a step on the staircase, you get qualified to put your foot on the next step. Once you have opened the main door of your house, you get access to open the bedroom or kitchen doors. You cannot open the inner bedroom doors before you open the main door, and you cannot open the closet doors in your bedroom before you open the bedroom door. God wants you to open all those doors. He wants you to climb up on all those steps, so He wants you to obey Him at every small step of your life.

1 Samuel 3:20-21 (KJV) – "[20] And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. [21] And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord."

God wants you to be known. He wants you to be known for your work for Him. Matthew 6:4 (KJV) – "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." God wants to reward you openly. The woman who gave the little money she had in the Bible (Mark 12:42) did not expect her story to be known, but Jesus was impressed by her faithful action that her story is read to this day.

God has created us all uniquely and endowed us with extraordinary abilities in that if we maximize them, going the extra mile in all we do, He will make us widely known for His glory. Samuel was known in the entire land of Israel.

1 Samuel 7:5-9 (KJV) – "[5] And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. [6] And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. [7] And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. [8] And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. [9] And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord of Israel, and the Lord heard him."

Samuel mobilized people for fellowship at Mizpeh. Mobilizing people is a skill that cannot be undermined. It is an essential skill in business and a vital skill in spreading the gospel. We need to

have a habit of inviting people to church. If we cannot do that, there is something we can do that is in the scope of our talents and skills to pull more people to the body of Christ.

Some can write, others can draw, others can play musical instruments, others can sing, and others can teach. The talents that God has endowed us with are endless. We are to use everything in our possession to spread the gospel. Samuel mobilized people at Mizpeh; together, they worshipped God and fasted. It is highly potent when just one individual fasts and prays. If that is the case, you can imagine how powerful it is when a group of people, like an entire nation, join together in praying and fasting.

Some churches have set special days for prayer and fasting. Some pray and fast every first Saturday/Sabbath of the month. Some have twenty-one days of prayer and fasting at the beginning of the year. Others have forty days of prayer and fasting in the middle or towards the end of the year.

Different churches have different times in which they have chosen to fast. We should not neglect those moments because our most needed blessing may lie in those prayer and fasting sessions. The Israelites requested Samuel to intercede for them. Samuel interceded for them, and God heard his prayer. James 5:16 (KJV) –"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Through the faith of one man, Samuel, God answered the prayers of an entire nation.

1 Samuel 7:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. [11] And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar."

"As Samuel was offering the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near." This statement can also read, "As Samuel was worshipping, the Philistines drew near," since offering a burnt offering was an act of worship. As he worshipped, his enemies came closer. By Faith, Samuel did not bring the worship session to a halt so that he could face his enemies. He continued to worship.

We are often distracted from God by things that seem of enormous magnitude but are indeed of tiny, if not microscopic magnitude, in the eyes of a God who is enormous than the entire universe. Many people have their phones on during church services because they expect an emergency. The

Devil knows this and may bring an emergency to distract you from worshipping God. God's time should be God's time.

When worshipping, we should be free from all distractions. If we use our phones to write sermon notes, they should be in flight mode. No emergency should be more significant than your particular consecrated time with God. By faith, Samuel understood that God is omnipotent and that He has power over all their enemies. God was delighted by this, and He discomfited the Philistines. Nothing will shake us if we stick firmly to God, the solid rock.

1 Samuel 7:12-13 (KJV) – "[12] Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. [13] So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

Samuel set a stone between Mizpeh and Shen and called it Ebenezer as a sign of giving thanks to God. Like the nine people with leprosy who went away joyfully and only one leper came back to say thanks to Jesus, most of us do not thank God when He blesses us.

We may cry to God for a long time to lift our afflictions, and when He does that, we forget what He has done for us and how sorrowful we were before He answered our prayers. Thanksgiving should not only be in the form of words but also actions. Samuel took a stone. He did something. Actions speak louder than words.

Some people pray to get a job, promotion, or financial breakthrough, and once they have gotten it, they celebrate it in nightclubs. I once heard a YouTuber/Influencer named Judy Nyawira being interviewed in a YouTube interview with Lynn Ngugi of LNN Network, saying how she listens to gospel music and sermons while in her vehicle. She sometimes asks herself, "How can I play secular music in a car God gifted me with?"

This YouTuber truly understands the essence of giving thanks to God by the choice of music she plays in her vehicle. I have seen gospel musicians who started their music careers in gospel switching to singing secular music. They might not know, but such actions make them look thankless to God.

Some have prayed for God to give them a computer and internet access, but after getting it, they use it to conduct cybercrime or watch pornography. We should be careful of what we do using the resources and the abilities that God has given us. Some have been gifted with incredible spiritual gifts, but they use them to manipulate people. Some cannot preach to a congregation if the church that is calling them fails to meet a certain threshold of money.

Thanksgiving is more grounded when it is in action than in words. That is why God commands us to return a tithe. We should return to God thanksgiving offerings when our prayers get answered. When we wake up and notice that we are still alive, we should thank God. We should thank God for giving us life using words and ask ourselves what we can do with our talents and resources to thank God for that day.

Some people wonder why I write a Christian blog. That is part of the reason. I have a skill/talent in writing, and the best way I can thank God for that skill and for enabling me to see another day is by writing Christian articles and sharing them with His beloved Children.

1 Samuel 7:15-17 (KJV) – "[15] And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. [16] And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. [17] And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord."

Samuel served God all the days of his life. He never got tired of serving God. When God gives you work to do, He gives you the grace to do it, in that you find yourself accomplishing much without getting tired. Samuel served God in his hometown, Ramah, and built an altar there. He also served God in places besides his hometown, such as Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh.

We should not limit our scope to our current location in anything that we do. We should serve God in our current location and other locations. We are commissioned to spread the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19). Our service to God should go far and wide.

"Since the days of Joshua the government had never been conducted with so great wisdom and success as under Samuel's administration. Divinely invested with the threefold office of judge, prophet, and priest, he had labored with untiring and disinterested zeal for the welfare of his people, and the nation had prospered under his wise control. Order had been restored, and godliness promoted, and the spirit of discontent was checked for the time. But with advancing years the

prophet was forced to share with others the cares of government, and he appointed his two sons to act as his assistants. While Samuel continued the duties of his office at Ramah, the young men were stationed at Beersheba, to administer justice among the people near the southern border of the land." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 603.4, Ellen G. White.

Samuel had shown great wisdom in administering the government, which had not been seen for about two hundred years. The nation prospered under his wise control. With God's help, he restored order among the Israelites and promoted Godliness.

It was not God's will that the Israelites should have a king like other nations, but they insisted on having a king. Therefore, God gave Samuel the work of anointing Saul as king.

"Samuel was instructed to grant the request of the people, but to warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course. "And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king." He faithfully set before them the burdens that would be laid upon them, and showed the contrast between such a state of oppression and their present comparatively free and prosperous condition. Their king would imitate the pomp and luxury of other monarchs, to support which, grievous exactions upon their persons and property would be necessary. The goodliest of their young men he would require for his service. They would be made charioteers and horsemen and runners before him. They must fill the ranks of his army, and they would be required to till *his* fields, to reap *his* harvests, and to manufacture implements of war for *his* service. The daughters of Israel would be for confectioners and bakers for the royal household. To support his kingly state he would seize upon the best of their lands, bestowed upon the people by Jehovah Himself. The most valuable of their servants also, and of their cattle, he would take, and "put them to his work." Besides all this, the king would require a tenth of all their income, the profits of their labor, or the products of the soil. "Ye shall be his servants," concluded the prophet. "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." However burdensome its exactions should be found, when once a monarchy was established, they could not set it aside at pleasure." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 606.2, Ellen G. White.

"But the people returned the answer, "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 607.1, Ellen G. White.

"Like all the nations." The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. As they depart from the Lord they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Christians are constantly seeking to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world. Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God. For the sake of earthly distinction they sacrifice the unspeakable honor to which God has called them, of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 607.2, Ellen G. White.

1 Samuel 10:1 (KJV) – "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?"

Samuel anointed Saul as King as God commanded him. When anointing Saul, Samuel was the highest person in Israel. Anointing Saul as King meant that Saul would overtake him in position. He did not fret and fail to carry out his God-given mission because of fear that Saul would be higher than him.

Many of us want people to be successful, but we do not want them to be more successful than us. Therefore, we block opportunities from them because we have fostered the evil spirit of competition. Samuel did not allow pride to rule him. He was not shaken that there would be someone higher than him. Giving people opportunities to progress and prosper is an act of faith.

1 Samuel 10:2 (KJV) – "When thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?"

As Samuel dealt with major spiritual and governance issues, he helped people with what most leaders consider minor issues. While it is good to have your eyes hooked on the central vision, it

is also good to try to deal with the personal problems of those under you in case they approach you. In organizations, top executives want to focus solely on the main goal and objectives of the organization and ignore employees whenever they present to them a personal problem.

The donkeys might have seemed minor to Samuel but were not minor to Saul and his father. As the saying goes," One man's trash is another man's treasure." Saul had come to visit Samuel because their donkeys were lost. He had not visited him because he knew Samuel wanted to anoint him as King. Samuel first dealt with the significant issue thoroughly, then with Saul's personal problem. This was an intelligent and wise approach.

Sometimes, our employees are less effective than we want them to be because of some personal issues that are disturbing them. It can be wise if we address them rather than ignore them. Sometimes, they know that you cannot solve their problem, and all they want from you is a listening ear. If we do this, we will significantly boost the organization's performance.

1 Samuel 10:24-25 – "[24] And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the King. [25] Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house."

Samuel pronounced Saul as King before the Israelites. Saul's anointing might have been private, but his appointment was public. God might have anointed you but may have not yet appointed you. He will do it when the right time comes.

Samuel told the people that God had chosen Saul to be King. He also told the people the manner of the kingdom, wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. Samuel was highly organized in doing God's work. His meticulous nature caused him to record in a book after he had spoken to the Israelites. Writing is powerful because it is more permanent than speaking.

1 Samuel 12:1-5 (KJV) – "[1] And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. [2] And now, behold, the King walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. [3] Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind

mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you. [4] And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. [5] And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness."

As a leader, Samuel had integrity. He allowed the people under his rule to hold him accountable. In some countries and organizations, the leader has the final say. Leaders want to avoid being held accountable for their actions. They want to avoid being held accountable for public money and if they spent it correctly.

Samuel came before the Israelites and asked them publicly to judge his actions if he had stolen anything from anyone or received a bribe. It is quite unfortunate that after enough evidence has been gathered for the corrupt deeds that a leader has done, nothing is done to them.

The justice system does not vindicate them; they do not come to the people to apologize or tell them how they plan to return their money. This has caused many nations, particularly third-world nations, to fail economically and has caused the stumbling and crumbling of many huge organizations.

Samuel appeared before the people for accountability purposes. The people confirmed that, indeed, he did not defraud them nor oppress them. We should not assume that our leadership is perfect. We should not assume that our products and services are perfect. We should ask for feedback from the people. This will guide us in improving our leadership style, products, and services. Asking for feedback and being accountable is an act of faith.

1 Samuel 12:6-7 (KJV) – "[6] And Samuel said unto the people, it is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. [7] Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which He did to you and to your fathers."

Samuel narrated to the people past historical events of what God had done for them even before they were born. He talked about Moses and Aaron and the victories they obtained with God's help. He gave them the narration of other people whom God gave victory.

Samuel narrated to them all these because he had knowledge of God's Word. We should study God's Word, reading the stories of the various Biblical heroes so that our faith can be grounded. Once we do that, we should share the Word of God with other people to strengthen their faith in God. As a teacher teaches, he learns more than he already knows. Secondly, as your audience's faith strengthens, yours strengthens, too.

1 Samuel 13:13-14 (AMP) – "[13] Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for [if you had obeyed] the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. [14] But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man (David) after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as leader and ruler over His people, because you have not kept (obeyed) what the Lord commanded you."

Saul was King, and he was superior in rank to Samuel. Samuel did not fear this. He told him the truth directly but with love. Some pastors fear telling certain people the truth, especially people in high positions of power. Some cannot tell a church member the truth even if he is wrong because the member gives the highest amount of offering, and they fear that they will be hated if they do so. Some fear for their lives, and that is why they choose to keep silent or sugarcoat.

Samuel told Saul the truth without fear. Telling the truth fearlessly is an uncommon act of faith, especially among Christians. Samuel told Saul how he offended God by failing to destroy all the Amalekites that God had told him to (1 Samuel 15:7-9). God commanded Saul to kill all the Amalekites, but he spared Agag, the King, and the fat animals.

This angered God, and through His servant Samuel, He sent him to tell Saul the following words:

1 Samuel 15:23 (KJV) – "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being King."

"But the Lord sent His servant with another message to Saul. By obedience he might still prove his fidelity to God and his worthiness to walk before Israel. Samuel came to the king and delivered the Word of the Lord. That the monarch might realize the importance of heeding the command, Samuel expressly declared that he spoke by divine direction, by the same authority that had called Saul to the throne. The prophet said, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek

did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The Amalekites had been the first to make war upon Israel in the wilderness; and for this sin, together with their defiance of God and their debasing idolatry, the Lord, through Moses, had pronounced sentence upon them. By divine direction, the history of their cruelty toward Israel had been recorded, with the command, "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." Deuteronomy 25:19. For four hundred years the execution of this sentence had been deferred; but the Amalekites had not turned from their sins. The Lord knew that this wicked people would, if it were possible, blot out His people and His worship from the earth. Now the time had come for the sentence, so long delayed, to be executed." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 627.3, Ellen G. White

"The forbearance that God has exercised toward the wicked, emboldens men in transgression; but their punishment will be none the less certain and terrible for being long delayed. "The Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, He shall be worth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act." Isaiah 28:21. To our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Ezekiel 33:11. The Lord is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, … forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Yet He will "by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7. While He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law. He is forced to do this, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. In order to save some He must cut off those who have become hardened in sin. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." Nahum 1:3. By terrible things in righteousness He will vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. And the very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 628.1, Ellen G. White.

God likens rebellion to the sin of witchcraft. Therefore, because Saul rejected God's Word, God rejected him from being King. This means that if Saul had accepted God's Word, God would accept him as King.

Accepting God's Word, which is obeying it, will cause God to accept us. This does not mean that works save us. We are saved by grace, and by grace, God enables us to overcome all sin. However, some of us choose to be stubborn, doing contrary to God's will. If we continue with such behavior and completely reject to turn a new leaf, God will indeed reject us.

1 Samuel 15:32-33 (KJV) – "[32] Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the King of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. [33] And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

Saul was supposed to kill Agag, but he spared him. God was displeased by this act. Saul was the one chosen by God to kill all the Amalekites, but he did not carry out the command excellently as God had expected him to. God's purpose must be fulfilled even if you reject to do what He has told you to. Samuel did not hesitate to fulfill God's purpose by killing Agag.

Samuel was lower in rank than Saul. God may choose someone less talented than us, with fewer abilities and fewer resources to fulfill the work that we have avoided.

Luke 19:37-40 (AMP) – "[37] As soon as He was approaching [Jerusalem], near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the entire multitude of the disciples [all those who were or claimed to be His followers] began praising God [adoring Him enthusiastically and] joyfully with loud voices for all the miracles *and* works of power that they had seen, [38] shouting, "Blessed (celebrated, praised) is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory (majesty, splendor) in the highest [heaven]!" [39] Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples [for shouting these Messianic praises]." [40] Jesus replied, "I tell you, if these [people] keep silent, the stones will cry out [in praise]!"

1 Samuel 15:35 (KJV) – "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel."

Samuel mourned for Saul. This means that even though Saul rejected God's Word, Samuel still loved him. We are to love everybody, including sinners. We should not celebrate and rejoice when someone who has troubled our life dies or fails in their endeavors.

Proverbs 24:17-18 (AMP) – "[17] Do not rejoice *and* gloat when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad [in self-righteousness] when he stumbles, [18] Or the Lord will see your gloating and be displeased, And turn His anger away from your enemy."

When our enemies fail, we should pray for them. Samuel's faith had matured to such a lofty level that he was able to mourn for Saul when he died. We can have the same faith even more if we ask God for it.

1 Samuel 16:6-7 (KJV) – "[6] And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. [7] But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

"When the sacrifice was ended, and before partaking of the offering feast, Samuel began his prophetic inspection of the noble-appearing sons of Jesse. Eliab was the eldest, and more nearly resembled Saul for stature and beauty than the others. His comely features and finely developed form attracted the attention of the prophet. As Samuel looked upon his princely bearing, he thought, "This is indeed the man whom God has chosen as successor to Saul," and he waited for the divine sanction that he might anoint him. But Jehovah did not look upon the outward appearance. Eliab did not fear the Lord. Had he been called to the throne, he would have been a proud, exacting ruler. The Lord's Word to Samuel was, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." No outward beauty can recommend the soul to God. The wisdom and excellence revealed in the character and deportment, express the true beauty of the man; and it is the inner worth, the excellency of the heart, that determines our acceptance with the Lord of hosts. How deeply should we feel this truth in the judgment of ourselves and others. We may learn from the mistake of Samuel how vain is the estimation that rests on beauty of face or nobility of stature. We may see how incapable is man's wisdom of understanding the secrets of the heart or of comprehending the counsels of God without special enlightenment from heaven. The thoughts and ways of God in relation to His creatures are above our finite minds; but we may be assured that His children will be brought to fill the very place for which they are qualified, and will be enabled to accomplish the very work committed to their hands, if they will

but submit their will to God, that His beneficent plans may not be frustrated by the perversity of man." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 638.1, Ellen G. White.

"Eliab passed from the inspection of Samuel, and the six brothers who were in attendance at the service followed in succession to be observed by the prophet; but the Lord did not signify His choice of any one of them. With painful suspense Samuel had looked upon the last of the young men; the prophet was perplexed and bewildered. He inquired of Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" The father answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep." Samuel directed that he should be summoned, saying, "We will not sit down till he come hither." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 638.2, Ellen G. White.

It is common for us human beings to judge by physical appearance. We stereotype people based on how they look. For example, people may think someone is mentally strong because he appears to be muscular and physically strong.

We may think some people are more intelligent than they really are because they are good-looking. Some people may look polite and humble from their facial expressions, but they are not. We vote for some leaders because of the image they portray.

Samuel thought Eliab was the chosen one because of his height and countenance. God told Samuel not to determine the chosen one by looking at his physical appearance, for God looks at the heart. Samuel did not argue with God. He did not try to force his decision above God's. He yielded himself to God's will. Many of us are not willing to be under the total influence of God.

Some people decide on marrying someone due to their physical appearance and good speech. Some have gotten into troublesome marriages because the other person pretended to be really good before they got married. None of us as human beings is too intelligent to clearly determine who is good for us or not. Sometimes, the Devil may look at the criteria we use to consider someone for marriage and present someone who matches that exact criteria but, in reality, is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Since we are limited in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, we are not able to fully know whether someone is suitable for us or not. Therefore, we need to pray for God to guide us. Unfortunately, some have been guided by God that a particular person is not suitable for them.

God can use various means to guide you. For example, He can use your parents, He can use other people, and He can even show you things in visions and dreams.

Usually, when someone is not suitable for you, you will receive more than one sign. Those who chose to ignore God's warning have ended up in regrettable marriages. Some have divorced, while some are still married for even more than thirty or forty years.

Samuel had a high level of judgment because he was an Israelite judge and he was in communion with God in his entire lifetime, but he could not know if Eliab was the right one or not. Despite his high level of judgment, he still leaned on God's power and control. Most of us have not reached the level of judgment that Samuel had, but we still insist on following our ways.

1 Samuel 16:11 (KJV) – "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither."

"Who can measure the results of those years of toil and wandering among the lonely hills? The communion with nature and with God, the care of his flocks, the perils and deliverances, the griefs and joys, of his lowly lot, were not only to mold the character of David and to influence his future life, but through the psalms of Israel's sweet singer they were in all coming ages to kindle love and faith in the hearts of God's people, bringing them nearer to the ever-loving heart of Him in whom all His creatures live." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 642.1, Ellen G. White.

"David, in the beauty and vigor of his young manhood, was preparing to take a high position with the noblest of the earth. His talents, as precious gifts from God, were employed to extol the glory of the divine Giver. His opportunities of contemplation and meditation served to enrich him with that wisdom and piety that made him beloved of God and angels. As he contemplated the perfections of his Creator, clearer conceptions of God opened before his soul. Obscure themes were illuminated, difficulties were made plain, perplexities were harmonized, and each ray of new light called forth fresh bursts of rapture, and sweeter anthems of devotion, to the glory of God and the Redeemer. The love that moved him, the sorrows that beset him, the triumphs that attended him, were all themes for his active thought; and as he beheld the love of God in all the providences of his life, his heart throbbed with more fervent adoration and gratitude, his voice rang out in a richer melody, his harp was swept with more exultant joy; and the shepherd boy proceeded from

strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge; for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. ." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 642.2, Ellen G. White.

Samuel was not willing to rest till he finished doing God's assignment of anointing a king. As a human being, he was probably tired of standing. However, his faith in God was more potent than his feeling of weariness. He told Jesse that he would sit down when David came. The gospel can go so far if we all have this attitude. God might have given us an assignment to conduct, but we procrastinate on it because we are feeling weary or sleepy, and it is daytime.

Sometimes, we feel unmotivated. As a human being sometimes, I do not want to write Christian articles. However, I put my feelings above faith instead of faith above feelings. Samuel had the love of God and the love of the people of Israel more than he had the love for himself. Therefore, he prioritized God's assignment more than his resting. We should be willing to say that we will not rest until God's assignment is complete.

Genesis 2:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. [2] And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. [3] And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

God rested on the seventh day after He had finished all the work of creation. He did not rest till He finished. We are created in His image. Therefore, we should rest when we finish our God-given assignments. This is because when we rest, our minds need to be free. It would not do one much justice as they are resting on Sabbath but still have regrets over something they did mediocrely.

One would not have rest in his mind knowing that they had enough time during the week to complete an assignment and they did not complete it. Samuel could not sit down until he finished his work. If he had sat down, he would have probably been reluctant to accomplish the assignment. God wants us to find rest in Him, and that is why He wants us to do our work excellently.

"If children were taught to regard the humble round of everyday duties as the course marked out for them by the Lord, as a school in which they were to be trained to render faithful and efficient service, how much more pleasant and honorable would their work appear. To perform every duty as unto the Lord, throws a charm around the humblest employment and links the workers on earth

with the holy beings who do God's will in heaven." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 574.1, Ellen G. White.

"Success in this life, success in gaining the future life, depends upon a faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. Perfection is seen in the least, no less than in the greatest, of the works of God. The hand that hung the worlds in space is the hand that wrought with delicate skill the lilies of the field. And as God is perfect in His sphere, so we are to be perfect in ours. The symmetrical structure of a strong, beautiful character is built up by individual acts of duty. And faithfulness should characterize our life in the least as well as in the greatest of its details. Integrity in little things, the performance of little acts of fidelity and little deeds of kindness, will gladden the path of life; and when our work on earth is ended, it will be found that every one of the little duties faithfully performed has exerted an influence for good—an influence that can never perish." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 574.2, Ellen G. White.

1 Samuel 16:13 (KJV) – "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."

When David came, Samuel anointed him. After Samuel anointed David, he returned to his home in Ramah. When you go home in the evening, you should go home knowing that you have finished what you need to finish. If you are a student, it would be great to spare some time in school to study because at home there are many distractions. If you are working, it will be good to finish your tasks for the day so that when you go home, you can fully concentrate on your family or worship. Samuel finished what he was doing before going home.

"The youth of our time may become as precious in the sight of God as was Samuel. By faithfully maintaining their Christian integrity, they may exert a strong influence in the work of reform. Such men are needed at this time. God has a work for every one of them. Never did men achieve greater results for God and humanity than may be achieved in this our day by those who will be faithful to their God-given trust." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 574.3, Ellen G. White.

The Faith of Samuel should not only be admired but also emulated. Let us faithfully carry out our roles and responsibilities while we are still alive in this world. If we have children, let us encourage them to serve God from a young age. We should be zealous in accomplishing God's assignment

before we rest or before we do anything else. If we do this, faith will be active in our lives. Faith is like a vehicle; it can move, but it needs you to drive it.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to faithfully serve You in the various roles and responsibilities that You have given me. Make me lean on Your understanding alone rather than on my understanding. Please give me the zeal to work for You and to finish my assignments before resting. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down the roles and responsibilities you have in your life.
2. Write down the abilities you have and the resources, for example, property, money, mentors, friends, etc.
3. Prayerfully, find out how you can use what you have listed above (in no. 2) to be effective in the roles and responsibilities that you have.

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CHAPTER 64

THE FAITH OF PROPHET NATHAN

Through Faith, Nathan gave advice,

A light amid the darkest skies,

With wisdom drawn from sacred scrolls,

He echoed truths that made hearts whole.

Through faith, Prophet Nathan rebuked,

Let us embrace the truth from the Holy Book,

Through faith, let us heed the words divine,

Reproofs that shape, refine, and realign.

Through Faith, Nathan taught with love,

Inspired by the Heavenly Father from up above,

He feared nobody; only God he did serve,

Guided by His Word with steadfast nerve.

Through Faith, Nathan anointed Solomon,

Through Faith, Nathan stood with courage strong,

Through trials faced and battles won,

He trusted God, the Great Almighty One.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Our focus is going to be on the faith of Prophet Nathan. According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the name Nathan means giver. The Bible says in Romans 12:1 (KJV) – "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Nathan lived sacrificially by offering his service to advance God's kingdom and for the benefit of His people. He is first mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:2 and 1 Chronicles 17:1 as an advisor to King David.

It is essential and would result in tremendous benefits for government and business leaders to have spiritual advisors. Unfortunately, many leaders have placed a higher value on intellectual advisors than spiritual advisors. Therefore, it is not strange to see governments and organizations lacking spiritual counselors. Spiritual mentors are important because life is spiritual. Everything we see in the physical realm began in the spiritual realm. For example, every building, vehicle, organization, and anything made by man started as an idea in the mind.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) – "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." God initiated this law because He created every visible thing through His invisible Word. The first step we should take when facing any life problem is addressing it spiritually before thinking of a physical solution. Pray first when you face a challenge, and you will be surprised when the Holy Spirit gives you an effective tactic you had not thought of before.

David had Nathan as one of his spiritual advisors. Spiritual advisors that are filled with the Holy Ghost are more effective than all secret service agents combined. They can give you intelligence of what your enemies are plotting against you. They can give you more vital information than no intellectual person can. Nathan announced to David the covenant God made with him, promising him an everlasting dynasty and a future temple (2 Samuel 7:4-17, 1 Chronicles 17:1-15).

1 Chronicles 17:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains. [2] Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. [3] And it came to pass the same night, that the Word of God came to Nathan, saying, [4] Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in."

Building God's house is a noble thing. David wanted to engage in that honorable and gallant assignment of making a place for the Lord. In his heart, he felt guilty that he lived in a house of cedar while the Ark of the Covenant dwelt in a tent. This feeling was a Godly emotion. Prophet Nathan agreed with David before consulting God. However, God did not want him to build the temple. Therefore, God told Nathan to tell David not to build it. David heeded the words of Nathan. Solomon built the temple of God when he reigned as king. We see here that through Nathan's advice, God's will was carried out efficiently and effectively. Had it not been for Nathan, David would have wasted a lot of time building the temple and neglected the essential duties God required of him.

2 Samuel 11:22-27 (AMP) – "[22] So the messenger left, and he came and told David everything that Joab had sent him *to report*. [23] The messenger said to David, "The men indeed prevailed against us and came out to us in the field, but we were on them *and* pushed them as far as the entrance of the [city] gate. [24] Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead." [25] Then David said to the messenger, "Tell Joab this, 'Do not let this thing disturb you, for the sword devours one [side] as well as another. Strengthen your battle against the city and overthrow it; and so encourage Joab." [26] When Uriah's wife [Bathsheba] heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she mourned for her husband. [27] And when the time of mourning was past, David sent *word* and had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done [with Bathsheba] was evil in the sight of the Lord."

David sinned by devising a plan that killed Uriah and took Bathsheba, his wife. He had done that because he had slept with Bathsheba, and she was expecting his child. The Lord sent Nathan to inform David about the sin he had committed.

This is the account:

2 Samuel 12:1-11 (KJV) – "[1] And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. [2] The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: [3] But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. [4] And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. [5] And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: [6] And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. [7] And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; [8] And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. [9] Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. [10] Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. [11] Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."

"Nathan the prophet was bidden to bear a message of reproof to David. It was a message terrible in its severity. To few sovereigns could such a reproof be given but at the price of certain death to the reprover. Nathan delivered the divine sentence unflinchingly, yet with such heaven-born wisdom as to engage the sympathies of the king, to arouse his conscience, and to call from his lips the sentence of death upon himself. Appealing to David as the divinely appointed guardian of his people's rights, the prophet repeated a story of wrong and oppression that demanded redress." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 720.5, Ellen G. White.

David knew Nathan because he was his spiritual advisor, but God did not send Nathan immediately after David had sinned. He sent him after Bathsheba had given birth to her son. Nathan did not tell

David the truth immediately. This is because truth has timing. God used various prophets in the Bible to preach truth to the people at different times for a reason. He would have used one man to give people the truth, but He did not do that. Therefore, before you preach the truth, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you on the proper timing. The reason is that timing goes along with relevance.

One message may be more relevant at a particular time than the other. For example, the prophecy that Isaiah gave about the first coming of Jesus Christ was more relevant before Jesus came than it would have been after Jesus came. At times, I might have prepared to preach a particular sermon to a congregation; just before I preach it, the Holy Spirit prompts me not to preach that message but instead a different sermon.

Sometimes, when I am about to write a Christian devotional article, the Holy Spirit prompts me not to write it and write another one instead. I have left some devotional articles incomplete and unpublished because the Holy Spirit prompted me that it was not the correct time to write them. For example, before I wrote this, I was supposed to write about the faith of Esther, but I left it aside to write this. Truth has timing, and it is God who knows the perfect timing.

Secondly, through the wisdom of God, Nathan tactfully rebuked David of his sin. He did not come harshly or disrespectfully when telling David about the sin he had committed. He cleverly packaged the message in a way that did not offend the king. I have seen people who, once they know of a particular truth, are filled with rage to rebuke those going against it. For example, the Bible says that the Seventh Day is the Sabbath, and it is true that God ordained the Sabbath day to be on the Seventh Day. The Sabbath is a specific day that God has set, not just any day of the week. When giving this commandment, God says in Exodus 20:8-11 (AMP) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath (seventh) day to keep it holy (set apart, dedicated to God). [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath [a day of rest dedicated] to the Lord your God; on that day you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock or the temporary resident (foreigner) who stays within your [city] gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested (ceased) on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy [that is, set it apart for His purposes]."

The fact that the commandment uses the definite article 'the' means that it is a specific day and not just any other day. Where Sabbath is mentioned in the Old and the New Testaments clearly

shows that it is a specific day. For example, the Bible says in Luke 23:54 (GNT), "[54] It was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin." It also says in Matthew 28:1 (GNT) – "After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb." The Sabbath is a specific day from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. The majority of the Christian population doesn't keep the correct Sabbath. I do not want to get deep into the Sabbath subject lest I deviate from the topic (you can study more about it on your own if you would love to).

Returning to how to preach the truth, some people get highly energized when they learn various Bible truths, such as the Sabbath. As a result, they go around preaching it with anger and condemnation. Instead of aiming to convert souls, they get into some competition to show the other party how wrong they are. I have often witnessed religious wars on social media where people are arguing with rage, one party telling the other how they will burn in hell. These fights are common when there is a discussion between Muslims and Christians. These fights are also common among Sabbath-keeping and non-Sabbath-keeping Christians. In the end, nobody gets converted because the Holy Spirit is not a supporter of strife and contention.

The Bible says in Philippians 2:3 (KJV) – "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This verse tells us that we should not do anything out of strife and vainglory. When we preach out of strife, we are wasting time and doing more harm than good. Nathan did not want God's message to go to waste. Therefore, he told David the truth in love. He started the narration with a story in a parable-like style. Jesus used parables to simplify the gospel, correct the wrongs in society, and make more people accept the message. How we preach the truth and the timing, we use to preach the truth matter.

Thirdly, Nathan took the message directly to David. He did not go through his servant or family member because that message did not concern them. It concerned David. Therefore, when preaching or speaking truth, we should give it to the right person. The relevance of a message should be in line with the audience. You cannot teach people a lesson about hairdressing in a class that teaches computer programming. The hairdressing lesson is beneficial but to the wrong audience.

Therefore, when someone wrongs you, you will not improve the situation by telling another person about someone else's wrongdoing without telling the person who wronged you directly. Doing that will make you guilty of gossip, and there will not be much difference between you and the

person who wronged you. Nathan went straight to David. If you disagree with a leader's ideas and mode of leadership, it is better to approach that leader directly and tell them of your grievances than to gossip. Nathan approached David directly because he was the right person to receive that message. King David repented after hearing God's Word through Nathan.

"The prophet's rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity. His soul was bowed in penitence before God. With trembling lips he said, "I have sinned against the Lord." All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 722.1, Ellen G. White.

Nathan did a lot to further the gospel of God. He wrote histories of the reigns of David and Solomon, which may be now lost but may have been sources for the books of Samuel and Kings (1 Chronicles 29:29, 2 Chronicles 9:29). Nathan helped Solomon become king by informing David of Adonijah's plot and anointing Solomon at the Gihon spring (1 Kings 1:8-45). He was also involved in the temple's music, along with other prophets (2 Chronicles 29:25). When people heard the temple's music; they bowed down to worship God. Gospel music should not be undermined because it puts people in the right mood and provides the proper atmosphere of worshipping God.

Nathan was a faithful prophet who served God and the kings of Israel with courage and wisdom. He was David's friend and advisor and a fearless messenger of God's truth. He was a man of integrity and honor who sought to glorify God in all he did.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, help me always to speak the truth in love. Please help me to say it at the right time, in the right way, and to the right person. Please give me your spirit to always guide me on what I should say. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Do you have a spiritual advisor? If you do, create a schedule of the days and times you are going to meet them.
2. List people whom you can mentor spiritually and create a plan of how you are going to mentor them.

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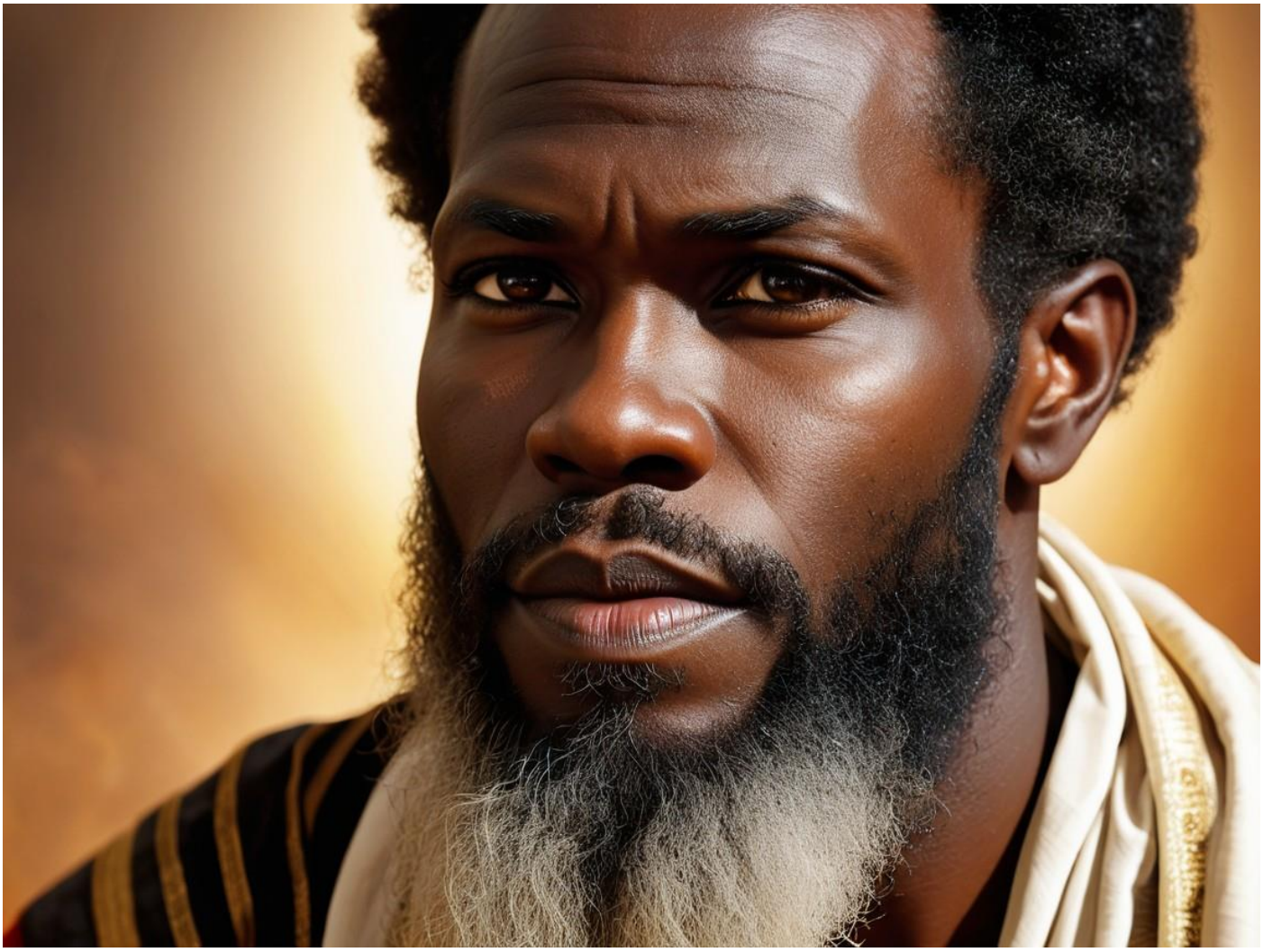
CHAPTER 65

THE FAITH OF PROPHET ELIJAH



In the barren years devoid of rain's gentle tears,

Elijah, bold and resolute, faced his fears,

By the Brook Cherith, God provided for the humble prophet,

Faith in God profits dry pockets.

Zarephath's widow, her hands scant with provision,

Became a conduit for divine precision,

Out of nothing, the Almighty God can light a massive fire,

When you delight in God, He will give you your heart's desire.

Through God who gives life, Elijah raised the dead,

A true man of God who caused fire when he prayed,

To face the same fate as Naboth, to Ahab he said,

Upon hearing God's Word, humbly, King Ahab repented.

The Lord shall fight for you, you shall hold your peace,

God's people are not weak as the world perceives,

The two captains of fifty, Elijah they failed to seize,

Elisha saw Elijah with a chariot of fire as he leaves.

On chariots of fire, Elijah's journey did cease,

But his work lived on, a flame never to decrease,

In mentorship, in miracle, in words profound,

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Elijah's legacy, in Elisha, was two times found.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

In the grand narrative of faith-filled heroes immortalized in Hebrews 11, one luminary shines brightest: Elijah, the epitome of divine courage and unwavering resolve. Though his name may not grace this passage (Hebrews 11), Elijah's exploits are woven with such magnificence that they seamlessly complement the miraculous deeds celebrated therein.

Elijah strides onto the biblical stage ready to challenge kingdoms, confront idolatry, and champion righteousness amidst moral decay. Yet, Elijah's story is not just about theatrics and marvels. It is a testament to divine intervention and awe-inspiring wonders. From halting rain for three and a half years to raising a widow's son from death's grip, Elijah's repertoire rivals that of the greatest illusionists at a royal gala.

And let us not overlook his mastery of turning weakness into strength, a theme echoed in the heroes immortalized in Hebrews 11:34. Amidst the serene solitude of the wilderness, surrounded by nature's symphony, Elijah discovers inner fortitude through communion with the Almighty. Like a phoenix rising from ashes, he emerges from moments of vulnerability imbued with renewed vigor, ready to face any challenge head-on.

Elijah's legacy shines as the epitome of hope and inspiration, guiding believers across generations. His saga vividly demonstrates that faith can move mountains, part seas, and summon fire from the heavens! So, when doubts assail your spirit, remember the stirring adventures of Elijah, and draw from his wellspring of boldness, courage, and unwavering commitment to righteousness. If Elijah could conquer adversity with such resolute faith, then surely, so can you!

The name Elijah comes from two Hebrew Components El and Yah. El (אֵל): This component of the name Elijah means "God" or "God Almighty" in Hebrew. It is a common term used in the Bible to refer to the God of Israel, denoting strength, power, and sovereignty. Yah (יָהּ): This part is a

shortened form of the sacred name of God, Yahweh (,(יהוה which is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be" (hayah). Yah is often used as a poetic abbreviation of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible and is associated with the personal name of God, particularly in praise and worship contexts.

When combined, the name "Elijah" (אֵלִיָּהוּ) in Hebrew is composed of "El" (God) and "Yah" (a shortened form of Yahweh), resulting in the meaning "My God is Yahweh" or "Yahweh is God."

This name reflects the central theme of monotheism and the exclusive worship of the God of Israel, emphasizing Elijah's role as a prophet dedicated to proclaiming the sovereignty and supremacy of Yahweh over all other gods. Elijah is believed to have lived during the ninth century BCE, during the reign of King Ahab of Israel (approximately 874–853 BCE). He is identified as Elijah the Tishbite, although the specific location of Tishbe is uncertain.

In 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah is described as being from the inhabitants of Gilead. Gilead was a region located to the east of the Jordan River, known for its rugged terrain and fertile plains. The name "Gilead" itself is believed to have originated from Hebrew roots meaning "rocky region" or "heap of stones."

Gilead was inhabited by various tribes and peoples throughout history. In biblical times, it was predominantly settled by Israelites, particularly the tribes of Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh, as their allotted inheritance after the conquest of Canaan. Additionally, Gilead was inhabited by other groups such as the Ammonites, Moabites, and various nomadic tribes.

The region of Gilead held strategic importance due to its natural resources, including fertile land for agriculture, grazing pastures for livestock, and forests for timber. It also served as a buffer zone between the Israelites and neighboring peoples.

Overall, Gilead was a diverse and significant region in biblical times, home to various peoples and cultures, and it played a prominent role in the narratives of the Old Testament, including the story of Elijah. Prophet Elijah is a significant figure in the Bible, known for his acts of faith and powerful miracles. Let us look at how faith enabled him to conquer the obstacles he overcame.

Out of the Comfort Zone

1 Kings 17:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. [2] And the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, [3] Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan."

The prophet Elijah is first introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 as Elijah the Tishbite from Gilead. Gilead, as we know, was renowned for its rich natural resources – fertile land, pastures for livestock, and bountiful forests. In simpler terms, Elijah lived in a place of comfort.

But this comfort did not diminish his faith. The scriptures tell us that Elijah's unwavering faith compelled him to answer God's call, even amidst his comfortable surroundings. This perfectly exemplifies the concept of the comfort zone acting as a significant obstacle on the path to achievement, a truth many of us have likely encountered in our own lives.

Buddha

Just like Buddha, the Prophet Elijah's story shows how stepping outside your comfort zone can lead to profound discovery.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Buddha was born Siddhartha Gautama, Buddha was a prince raised in luxury within the sheltered walls of a royal palace in Lumbini, modern-day Nepal. His world was one of unimaginable comfort, carefully curated to shield him from the harsh realities of life, especially suffering. However, a deep empathy blossomed within him, a realization that suffering was an undeniable truth of the human condition.

This yearning for understanding propelled him out of his comfort zone. He embarked on a radical journey of asceticism, enduring years of meditation and self-denial. Legend tells of his encounter with the "Four Sights" – a frail old man, a ravaged sick person, a lifeless corpse, and a serene ascetic. These encounters were a stark awakening, shattering his sheltered existence and igniting his quest for enlightenment.

It is from this profound transformation that Buddha's Four Noble Truths emerged: the truth of suffering (Dukkha), the truth of the cause of suffering (Samudaya), the truth of the end of suffering (Nirodha), and the truth of the path to the end of suffering (Magga).

There is a common misconception that those born into privilege rarely surpass their parents' achievements. The adage "necessity is the mother of invention" highlights the idea that struggle spurs progress. After all, if everything is provided, why venture outside your comfort zone? While

there's truth to this notion, it is not a universal law. Buddha proved them wrong when he stepped out of his privileged comfort zone to go to the outer world and learn more about suffering.

Both Buddha and Elijah, though from vastly different backgrounds, demonstrate the transformative power of stepping outside one's comfort zone. It is a journey that can lead to profound self-discovery and a deeper understanding of the world, regardless of your origins.

John Pierpont Morgan

Imagine a world without JPMorgan Chase, a global financial titan with branches reaching across the globe. Believe it or not, this powerhouse company owes its existence to one remarkable man: John Pierpont Morgan, better known as J.P. Morgan.

Born with a silver spoon in his mouth in 1837 (Britannica, 2024), J.P. Morgan was the son of a successful financier (Britannica, 2024). Yet his story is not one of simply inheriting wealth. J.P. Morgan was a man who thrived on challenges. He was not content with resting on his laurels.

His fingerprints are all over the transformation of American industry. J.P. Morgan saw the potential in a fledgling railroad system riddled with inefficiencies. He was not daunted by the chaos. Instead, he stepped up, playing a pivotal role in consolidating and reorganizing these struggling railroads (Chernow, 2004). This was not just tinkering around the edges – it was a complete overhaul. The result? A more stable and efficient railroad industry, boasting some of the largest and most successful railroad systems the country had ever seen (Chernow, 2004).

But J.P. Morgan's ambitions stretched far beyond the tracks. He turned his keen eye for business towards industries ripe for consolidation. By financing the mergers of various industrial companies, he played a key role in the birth of American giants like U.S. Steel and General Electric (Chernow, 2004). These mergers were not just about combining companies; they were strategic moves that created economies of scale, giving these new powerhouses a significant edge in the market (Chandler, 1977).

J.P. Morgan's legacy is a testament to the power of vision, strategic thinking, and a willingness to tackle complex challenges. He did not shy away from venturing outside his comfort zone, and in doing so, he helped reshape the American business landscape.

Charles Koch

Charles de Ganahl Koch was not your typical rich kid. Born into a privileged family that owned Koch Industries, you might expect a life of luxury. But Charles' father, Fred C. Koch, had different plans. In an interview with Warren Cassell Jr., Koch recounted, "My father wanted me to work as if I was the poorest person in the world." This was not a life of deprivation, but a deliberate push out of his comfort zone. It may have been tough training at the time, but Charles now stands as the Co-Owner, Chairman, and CEO of Koch Industries (Britannica, n.d.), a testament to the value of his father's unconventional approach.

Other people who were not necessarily born in wealthy families but who stepped out of their comfort zones to achieve notable success are:

Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey's rise to global media mogul status is a testament to resilience, calculated risks, and a relentless pursuit of growth. Her story is not just about fame and fortune – it is a roadmap for overcoming challenges and stepping outside your comfort zone.

Oprah's childhood in rural Mississippi was far from idyllic. Poverty and instability were constant companions, and she has openly spoken about facing hunger and wearing clothes made from potato sacks (Biography.com, 2024). But these early hardships instilled in her a powerful work ethic and an unwavering ability to persevere.

At just nineteen, with no prior broadcasting experience, Oprah landed a job as a radio co-anchor in Nashville (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). This unexpected opportunity thrust her into the unfamiliar world of public speaking. Facing her fears head-on, she honed her communication skills and discovered a natural talent for captivating an audience.

The transition from radio to television in Baltimore in 1976 marked another significant step outside her comfort zone (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). Television presented new challenges with a

focus on visual presentation and audience engagement. Yet, Oprah embraced this opportunity, developing a captivating on-air presence that drew viewers in.

Oprah was not afraid to push boundaries to elevate her show in Chicago. She tackled controversial topics like racism, abuse, and sexuality, which were often avoided by mainstream talk shows at the time (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). She also welcomed a diverse range of guests, from celebrities to ordinary people, creating a platform for voices that were often unheard. These bold moves resonated with audiences and helped her show stand out in a crowded market.

In 1985, Oprah co-founded Harpo Productions, her own production company (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). This entrepreneurial venture required her to step outside her established role as a talk show host and take on new responsibilities in production and content creation. This move showcased her ambition and willingness to learn new skills.

Oprah's love of learning extends beyond business ventures. Launched in 1996, her Book Club segment became a cultural phenomenon (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). This initiative not only boosted literacy rates but also demonstrated her commitment to lifelong learning, inspiring viewers to explore new ideas and broaden their horizons.

Throughout her journey, Oprah has been open about her personal struggles with weight management and self-discovery. By actively pursuing personal growth and encouraging her audience to do the same, she became a powerful role model. Her story exemplifies the transformative power of stepping outside your comfort zone and embracing the challenges that lead to growth and self-improvement.

Oprah Winfrey's remarkable journey is an inspiration to anyone who dares to dream big and venture into the unknown. By embracing challenges, taking calculated risks, and relentlessly pursuing learning, she achieved extraordinary success and left an indelible mark on the world.

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela's name is synonymous with courage, resilience, and the fight for justice. But his journey was not confined to a single, iconic moment. His entire life was a testament to stepping outside his comfort zone, pushing boundaries, and ultimately achieving extraordinary things.

Early Defiance: Even before his imprisonment, Mandela, a young lawyer, stood up against the racist system of apartheid in South Africa (Nelson Mandela Foundation, n.d.). This was not just defying the law; it was a deliberate act of challenging the status quo, a clear sign of a man unafraid to step outside his comfort zone (Smith, 2016).

Years of Imprisonment: For 27 years, Robben Island became Mandela's harsh reality. Isolation and harsh conditions could not break his spirit. Instead, he used this time to learn, grow, and strategize for a future free South Africa. This was not just passive endurance; it was a conscious choice to adapt and prepare, a testament to his immense mental fortitude (Smith, 2016).

The Controversial Choice: Upon his release, Mandela surprised many by advocating for reconciliation with white South Africans. This was not the easy path. It was a courageous decision, driven by a belief in healing the nation's deep wounds. Negotiating with his former oppressors required immense personal courage, a quality honed during his years of struggle (Smith, 2016).

Leading a New Nation: In 1994, history was made when Mandela became South Africa's first Black president. Leading a nation through such a dramatic transformation – building bridges, fostering unity, and dismantling a system of oppression – undoubtedly pushed him outside his comfort zone once again (Smith, 2016).

Nelson Mandela's life story is an inspiration. It is a powerful reminder that taking risks, venturing into the unknown, and pushing boundaries can lead to incredible achievements and positive change.

Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan. The name itself conjures images of gravity-defying dunks, clutch game-winners, and a relentless drive for excellence. But did you know "His Airness" wasn't always destined for greatness?

From Humble Beginnings to a Shocking Rejection: Born in 1963, Jordan's love for basketball ignited early. Imagine his heartbreak, then, when he was cut from his high school varsity team as a sophomore. This could have been a crushing blow, but Jordan's story takes a different turn.

Fueling Disappointment into Determination: Instead of giving up, Jordan channeled his disappointment into a burning desire to improve. He trained relentlessly, honing his skills and

surpassing everyone's expectations. By the next year, he not only made the team but proved the power of perseverance (Lazenby, 2014).

College Star and NBA Arrival: Jordan's talent blossomed at the University of North Carolina, leading them to a national championship in 1982 (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). Drafted by the Chicago Bulls in 1984, he entered the NBA with a promising future. However, championships would not come easy.

Early Struggles and Forging a Legend: Facing seasoned veterans, Jordan did not win a ring right away. But this setback only fueled his fire. He tirelessly refined his skills, addressing weaknesses and developing his now-iconic leaping ability (Heisler, 2008). By the late 1980s, his hard work paid off. Jordan led the Chicago Bulls to a dynasty, winning six NBA championships between 1991 and 1998, solidifying his status as a legend (National Basketball Association, n.d.).

Baseball and Back to Basketball: In a surprising move in 1993, Jordan retired from basketball to pursue a childhood dream of playing baseball. He was not afraid to step out of his comfort zone and leave his legendary basketball status to try a new sport. This detour proved challenging, and adapting to a new sport brought its own set of difficulties (Baden, 2014).

The Return of the King: After two years, Jordan returned to basketball, even stronger and more determined. He led the Bulls to three more championships, proving that setbacks can be steppingstones to even greater heights (Heisler, 2008).

A Legacy of Inspiration: Michael Jordan's story is more than just basketball. It is about unwavering dedication, the ability to bounce back from setbacks, and the relentless pursuit of improvement. He inspires athletes and individuals worldwide to overcome obstacles and chase their dreams. Jordan's journey is a testament to the human spirit's ability to rise above adversity and achieve greatness.

Marie Curie

Marie Curie's life, chronicled in Britannica (n.d.), is a captivating story of unwavering spirit and relentless pursuit of scientific progress. Throughout her career, she defied limitations on multiple fronts, venturing far beyond her comfort zone.

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From Humble Beginnings to Daring Dreams: Born Maria Skłodowska in occupied Poland, Curie dared to dream of a future in science, a path far from what society expected of a woman in the late 19th century (Britannica, n.d.). Her journey to study in Paris was not just about academics; it meant leaving her family behind, adapting to a new culture and language, and navigating a social environment where female scientists were unwelcome.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling in a Man's World: Science in Curie's era was a club with a strictly enforced "no girls allowed" sign (Britannica, n.d.). Throughout her career, she faced constant skepticism and resistance from established male scientists. To gain recognition and access to resources, Curie had to prove herself exceptional again and again, overcoming a system that often disregarded the contributions of women.

Pioneering the Unknown: Curie's groundbreaking work with radioactivity dealt with entirely new elements. There were no established safety protocols, forcing her to become a pioneer in this area. She developed new techniques while essentially working in uncharted scientific territory (Britannica, n.d.).

Perseverance Through Setbacks: Extracting tiny amounts of radioactive elements from tons of ore was a tedious and laborious task. For years, Curie and her husband Pierre persevered in rudimentary lab conditions, facing countless setbacks and failures (Britannica, n.d.). Their unwavering dedication ultimately led to groundbreaking discoveries.

A Dedication That Came at a Cost: The dangers of radiation were unknown in Curie's time (Britannica, n.d.). For years, she handled radioactive materials with minimal protection, which ultimately contributed to her health problems. Her dedication serves as a stark reminder of the sacrifices scientists sometimes make in the pursuit of knowledge.

Marie Curie's life story, as documented in the Encyclopedia Britannica, is a powerful testament to defying limitations and pushing boundaries. Her relentless drive and willingness to venture into the unknown paved the way for groundbreaking scientific advancements, inspiring generations of scientists to come.

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was not just a composer; he was a revolutionary force in the world of music (Britannica, n.d.). His music transcended the limitations of his time, and its influence continues to resonate today. Here is what made Beethoven such a groundbreaking figure:

Early Innovation: Forget following the rules! Even as a child prodigy, Beethoven was not afraid to break the mold (Britannica, n.d.). His early compositions were infused with a boldness that set him apart from his peers (Rosen, 2001). He experimented with form and structure, laying the foundation for the revolutionary music that would come later.

Triumph Over Tragedy: Imagine a musician losing their hearing – it is a terrifying thought. In his late twenties, Beethoven began to experience deafness, a devastating blow that could have silenced him forever (Britannica, n.d.). But Beethoven was not one to give up. With unwavering determination, he found new ways to compose and experience music (Sullivan, 1998). This forced him to push outside his comfort zone. He became a catalyst for innovation, driving him to explore uncharted creative territories.

Shattering the Mold: Beethoven's impact is most evident in his radical approach to established musical forms like symphonies and piano sonatas (Britannica, n.d.). He tore down the limitations of these structures, pushing the boundaries of length, complexity, and emotional expression (Marston, 2004). It was not an easy journey for audiences or musicians. His music challenged them to grapple with new sonic landscapes and a wider range of emotions.

Fearless Exploration: As Beethoven aged, his compositions became even more experimental and dissonant (Britannica, n.d.). Unfazed by the possibility of alienating listeners, he continued his relentless pursuit of new artistic territory (Kerman, 1995). His late-period works stand as a testament to his unwavering commitment to artistic exploration, even in the face of potential criticism.

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Hellen Keller

Helen Keller was not your average person. Her life was not merely a storybook; it was an epic adventure of overcoming seemingly impossible challenges. Every twist and turn showcased her incredible spirit, a spirit that refused to be broken (Keller, 1903).

Imagine a world of complete darkness and silence. No sound, no spoken words, no way to connect with others. This was Helen's reality for the first few years of her life (Keller, 1903). Learning to communicate and understand the world was a monumental task that pushed her far outside her comfort zone (Bruehl, 1989).

Then, a turning point arrived. When her teacher, Anne Sullivan, came into her life, Helen was understandably resistant and frustrated. Learning a whole new way to communicate through touch was scary and unfamiliar (Gordon, 2019). But Helen was not one to give up. She faced this challenge head-on with unwavering determination (Keller, 1903).

Learning a language is hard enough for most children. But for Helen, it meant grasping complex ideas without ever seeing or hearing them (DuBois, 2000). It took incredible focus and a constant willingness to learn and adapt (Keller, 1903). Helen's dedication to language is a true testament to her unyielding spirit.

Once Helen found her voice, she refused to be silenced. She became a powerful advocate for people with disabilities, traveling the world and speaking out for those who could not speak for themselves (Wagner, 2007). Public speaking can be nerve-wracking, but Helen used her newfound voice to make a real difference (Keller, 1913).

Helen Keller shattered all expectations of what someone with her limitations could achieve (Wadsworth, 2013). Her relentless pursuit of acceptance and opportunity took immense courage and a willingness to challenge the status quo (Keller, 1913). Her story is a powerful reminder that human potential has no limits.

Helen Keller's journey is an inspiration to anyone who feels trapped or limited. Her unwavering spirit and her remarkable achievements show us the incredible things that can be accomplished when we push ourselves beyond our comfort zones (Keller, 1903).

Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White's story of achievement involves stepping outside her comfort zone in several ways. Here is how we can see her pushing boundaries:

Childhood Accident: Around the age of nine, Ellen G. White experienced a life-altering event. While walking home from school, she was struck in the face by a stone thrown by a classmate. The injury left her unconscious for weeks and with lasting health problems. This experience, which she later described as a turning point in her life, may have contributed to her developing a deep sense of faith (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Early Visions: At a young age, Ellen White began experiencing visions and messages she attributed to God. Sharing these experiences in a conservative religious community would have been quite challenging and could have brought ridicule (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Public Speaking: Ellen White, a young woman in the mid-1800s, was not expected to be a public speaker or leader. However, she felt compelled to share her visions and interpretations of scripture, venturing outside the traditional gender roles of her time (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Facing Criticism: Her visions and interpretations of scripture were not universally accepted. She faced criticism and opposition from within her own religious community, requiring her to defend her beliefs and calling (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Travel and Writing: Ellen White traveled extensively throughout North America and Europe, speaking, and writing prolifically. This would have pushed her outside her comfort zone in terms of physical challenges, cultural differences, and the demands of a public life (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Organizational Leadership: She played a key role in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, helping shape its doctrines and practices. This leadership role would have required significant administrative and organizational skills, which may not have come naturally to her (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

Ellen G. White's story shows how stepping outside your comfort zone can be driven by a higher purpose. Her perseverance and willingness to face criticism for her beliefs is an inspiring example.

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Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 8:9 (KJV) - "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Of all the people mentioned and unmentioned who have gone out of their comfort zones, Jesus Christ is the greatest. Jesus Himself deserted His own comfort in heaven to come to earth and live among the poorest. He was born in a manger, a place that animals lived.

Being born in a manger symbolized that He did not deserve to be born in a decent place among human beings. Jesus is righteous but He chose to take our sinful state and exchange it with His righteousness. Therefore, He took every dreadful thing we have so that He may give us every good thing He has. He is the epitome of going out of one's comfort zone.

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed." – The Desire of Ages, Page 25.2, Ellen G. White.

Jesus, despite being sinless, carried the burden of humanity's sins upon Himself. He endured the suffering and death that rightly belonged to us due to our violations of God's law. Through Christ's sacrifice, believers gain access to God's grace and favor. Instead of facing the deserved punishment for our sins, we are offered forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Despite His innocence, Jesus assumed the guilt and condemnation of humanity's sins. This underscores the voluntary nature of Christ's sacrifice and His willingness to bear the consequences of humanity's rebellion against God.

By believing in Christ, believers are credited with His righteousness. This means that God considers believers righteous not because of their own merit, but because of Christ's righteousness attributed to them. Jesus faced death on the cross, the ultimate consequence of sin, so that believers could attain eternal life in Him. Through His resurrection, believers are assured of victory over death and the promise of eternal fellowship with God.

"With His stripes we are healed" - This phrase references Isaiah 53:5, which prophesies about the suffering and atoning work of the Messiah. It signifies the spiritual healing and restoration believers receive through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death.

A profound exchange was brought about by Christ's sacrificial death: He took our place, bearing our sins and punishment, so that we could receive forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life through faith in Him.

Romans 8:32 (KJV) - "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

God the Father did not spare His own son. His infinite, unconditional love for the sinful people of the world caused Him to give His only begotten son Jesus Christ to die for the world (John 3:16). God the Father went out of His comfort zone to save humanity.

Philippians 2:5-11 (KJV) – "5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

By going out of His comfort zone, God succeeded in saving the human race. The evil that Satan had brought through pride, Jesus overcame it through humility. Humility will always be victorious over pride. Righteousness will always win against evil. God will always defeat Satan. With His omnipotence, Jesus did not fight back. Instead, He humbled himself unto death even the death of the cross.

Embracing humility requires one to get out of their comfort zone. For example, when you embrace humility and become teachable as a little child to acquire truth, you will be able to learn more. Thus, your life will transform positively. Getting out of your comfort zone will make you gain a new skill. On the other hand, when you are proud and do not want to appear like you lack the knowledge of something, you will remain in the state that you are in.

A Prerequisite for Growth

“The positive side of the negative side is this: The forces that are working against me that I face are the only forces that make me stronger. It is the resistance that I’m facing that creates strength. That is why we don’t lift air, we lift weights.” – Myron Golden.

A popular saying goes, “Growth comes from discomfort.” Learning is not always a pleasant experience. The older one grows the more likely one avoids new things. This may explain why some people never go beyond a certain level of achievement.

Leadership expert John C. Maxwell and many other personal growth authors have emphasized this statement, “What brought you here is not what will take you there.” To clarify this, when you are traveling from New York, USA to Nairobi, Kenya, you may use a taxi or a bus to take you to the airport. But you cannot use the same taxi or bus to take you to Kenya. You will exit the vehicle which has brought you to the airport and board a plane that will fly overseas and take you to your desired destination.

When you are learning something new as an adult, humility is needed and readiness to adapt to new things. Children find it easier to learn new things because they have acknowledged that they do not know anything. So, when you tell them to do something, they are likely going to do it without questioning, especially if they are below 8 years old.

Matthew 19:14 (KJV) - "But Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus says, “For of such is the kingdom of heaven.” What He means is that those who have the heart of little children will go to heaven. Humility is common among little children. In his book, *Why A Students Work for C Students and B Students Work for the Government,* Robert Kiyosaki says that people who are between the age of 12 to 24 adapt what is called rebellious learning. Robert means that they learn through rebelliousness. This can be dangerous, because one would take a long time to get it right by rebelling against truth than they would if they had humbly obeyed the truth.

Teenagers and adults are unwilling to go out of their comfort zones. Parents and their teenage children tend to fight because neither wants to listen to the other. Parents may see the dangerous path that their teenage children are taking and want them to avoid that path by all means. However, they tend to fail greatly and are thus frustrated because they want their conversations to be one

sided. They expect their children to obey them because they are older and more experienced than them.

Raising teenage millennials, generation z and the alpha generation has been quite challenging for some parents. This is because, the parents grew up in a setting where one would obey without question whatever an adult would tell them.

We should understand that we live in the information age, whereby almost every information one is looking for is on the internet. Teachers of this era may find it more difficult to teach students because some students have more information than teachers. This is because most of the information that people need is readily available and affordable. The children growing up in this era may be more knowledgeable on some things than adults. So, they question whatever belief they are taught.

Counsel to parents is to seek God's guidance on wisdom on how to bring up your kids and give a listening ear to them. Instead of merely issuing commands, teach. Help them understand the logic and value behind whatever you are telling them to do. If you tell them not to listen to secular music, give them a reason. These teachings can be powerful if you can give personal examples.

Some children are struggling in silence with things that are not as big as they look. They do not want to tell anyone what they are going through because they feel no one would understand them since the people around them have painted perfect pictures of themselves. The pastor in their church is always honored with good words and praise and seems too holy to approach. Their school teachers are always well-dressed-dressed and seem to be highly disciplined. Their parents and church teachers are highly educated with PhDs and have top jobs in top organizations.

The child is struggling to meet the standards of these esteemed people in society surrounding him and feels greatly discouraged whenever make a mistake. John C. Maxwell says that while communicating, when we tell people of our achievements we win their respect and when we tell people of our failures and mistakes we win their love. He urges us to find a way to balance them. Unfortunately, many successful teachers (this includes successful parents) only tell the youth and children of their success.

Parents should spend more time with their children and give them stories of valuable life lessons, how they attained the success they attained and some of the failures they encountered. Some examples may seem embarrassing to give, but ask God for guidance on how to communicate them.

Our parents and grandparents in Africa (Probably those born before 1980) and maybe in other parts of the world lived in an age where there was minimal democracy. They were forced to obey the colonizers. The first African leaders who took over the governments from the colonizers adopted this system. Therefore, the saying, "you cannot question your boss" became engraved in the hearts of people who grew up in that era whether consciously or subconsciously.

This mindset had both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage being, one would flourish in life, if he or she followed the right advice. The disadvantage was the good beliefs adopted would be shallow in the minds of the individuals adopting them because they have not taken time to question them and reason through them. At the same time, it would lead to a narrow perspective as people would enclose their minds to adopt other strategies and methods.

For example, the oppressors widely taught the highly absorbed notion, "Go to school, and work hard so that you may get a good job." Because some of them desired that people should remain oppressed, they never inspired people to follow their purpose and pursue their talents. What happened is those who followed that advice ended up living a life they do not like.

Some people ended up being poor because they tried so hard to get good grades in school, but they could not get them and since they were taught that excelling in school and getting a job is the only way, they lose hope easily. Others have ended up being middle class (upper or lower). They graduated with good grades and got the job of their dreams and went up the ranks in employment positions. After they retire, they get their retirement pension.

Some have encountered years of delay in getting these pensions. While some have had the governments of their countries reduce their retirement benefits. Therefore, the standard of quality of life they were accustomed to goes down. When the standard of someone's life goes down involuntarily, the person loses their freedom. I have used the word involuntarily because some rich men and women have chosen to voluntarily live a modest life. That is different. However, most people (including Christians) if they were honest, would tell you that the life they are living is not the life of their dreams, it is a life forced by circumstances.

People losing their financial freedom may lead them to losing freedom in other areas. For example, less financial freedom may lead to depression and wrangles in the family. Less financial freedom leads to less time freedom. For example, in less developed countries, public transport can be very inefficient. Sometimes, people have to spend time waiting for the bus to take off as they are waiting for people to fill up. They stop at every bus stop for people to alight and for others to board. Private transport is more expensive but it saves you so much time.

A bus can take hours to travel from one city to another if the cities are hundreds of kilometers apart. Many people will board it because they cannot afford an airplane which takes less than an hour to travel the same distance. God wants you to be materially wealthy because if you take an airplane compared to taking a bus, you will be able to use the rest of the hours bringing more people to His kingdom. Instead of spending those 7 or 8 hours on the road, you can use one hour to visit a children's home, another hour to meet a friend and have a constructive conversation, you can do many things with that time.

God wants His genuine children to have freedom of choices. If you choose to use public transport let it be because you enjoy it (maybe you want to mingle with people) but don't let it be because you can't afford a better choice. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to set the captives free (Luke 4:18). God wants us to be free in all areas including our finances. The more you study, understand, and apply the words of the Bible, the more liberated you will be.

Sometimes and in some countries, in the case of government workers, the retirement benefits and other benefits for citizens who are considered less privileged may impose a heavy burden on the taxpayers, hence contributing to an increase in taxes. It is not God's ideal will for people to be too dependent on the government or on anyone else (Jeremiah 17:5).

One who sells his goods and services to people receives money for the value they offer. The relationship between the buyer and the seller is a balanced relationship, they are both benefitting each other. This may sound harsh but a person who is begging on the streets, especially if they have a fully functional body is not adding much value, instead he is taking away. The same applies to those people who are over dependent on government schemes for the underprivileged. Begging puts you under the mercy of someone.

For example, governments are formed by people and man is to err. The government may legislate and enforce a very unbiblical law like legalizing gay marriages. That may force those who depend on it to vote for that law. Since they e they will not have a choice, they will have to vote for it even if they don't like it. In the last days, many of the people who will bow down to the mark of the beast are people who don't want to bow down to it, but circumstances have forced them to. Financial challenges force people to work on the Sabbath day and do various evil things.

Nick Vujicic does not have any of the four limbs, but he does not beg on the streets and he does not depend on government aid? Why? Because he is dependent on God. God showed him his purpose and gave him direction on how to pursue that purpose and showed him how to get out of his comfort zone and make the best from the little he thought he had. Going outside the comfort zone is not always a comfortable idea to think about, leave alone act upon, but it is the most comfortable choice you can ever make.

Besides Colonel Sanders and a few others, very few people do something significant beyond the age of sixty because the only possibilities they see is their pension. However, when one takes their own precious time and thoroughly studies the Bible, they will realize that God wants you to pursue your purpose in utilizing your talents for the glory of God.

You can get fired from your job. No one can fire you from your purpose and talents. You can retire from your job. You can never retire from your purpose and talents. Working for a salary requires one to do the bare minimum to get that salary. In fact, many employees do the bare minimum because they are working for a salary. That may explain why we have a lot of unethical and immoral practices in the workplace because people are not doing what they love to do. They always have excuses to miss work and mark themselves present when they are absent. One needs to pursue their purpose.

When more people pursue their purpose, immorality would reduce, and ethics would increase. I do not need to mark myself present when writing Christian articles, poems, songs or while leading a team in developing technology products. I have tried my best through God's help to tailor my company Real Biz Digital to allow more people to pursue their purpose.

For example, we do not have strict work hours from 8 to 5. Instead, we work with deadlines. I do not need people to be physically present at the workplace. They can work from wherever they want

to work from as long as the work gets done. This fosters independence and once people feel independent, they are likely to be more responsible and will highly likely do the work given from their hearts. Purpose and talents push you to get out of your comfort zone and makes you add great value to the lives of people, thus living the life of your dreams.

Inspiring quotes on getting out of the comfort zone:

"Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. You might actually fly." – Anonymous.

"Life begins at the end of the comfort zone." – American Author, Neale Donald Walsch.

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." – Wayne Gretzky.

The Israelites were probably used to prosperity, fertile land and constant rains. This prosperity probably made them feel that there was no need for God and as the days continued, they continued in doing evil. God had given them time to repent but they would not change their ways. God in His love, had to bring drought so that the Israelites would return to Him. He sent Elijah to speak to them. Elijah in his humility and willingness to serve God, did not hesitate. He risked his life, went out of his comfort zone, and approached the highest person in that land, King Ahab with that hard message.

Have the humility of a child and trust in God as you get out of your comfort zone.

Faith above Worries

1 Kings 17:2-6 (KJV) – "[2] And the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, [3] Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. [4] And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. [5] So he went and did according unto the Word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. [6] And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

Elijah delivered God's message to King Ahab concerning the forthcoming drought. He was among the Israelite people. Therefore, he was probably ready to get affected by the lack of rain. He

probably did not know what he was going to do and had no idea of how he was going to get food in future.

Matthew 6:25-29 (KJV) – "[25] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? [26] Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [27] Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? [28] And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

We rob our minds of rest when we spend too much time trying to figure out the future. A genuine Christian should never worry about tomorrow or about anything else for that matter. Matthew 6:34 (KJV) - "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our part is to play our part. Once you know that you have done what you are supposed to do and you have done your best, leave the rest to God.

Psalm 127:1-2 (AMPC) - "[1] Except the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. [2] It is vain for you to rise up early, to take rest late, to eat the bread of [anxious] toil—for He gives [blessings] to His beloved in sleep."

It is vain for one to engage in endeavors without having God as the central figure in those pursuits. God does not encourage laziness as some confuse Psalm 127:1-2 to mean. Instead, He does not want you to put your total trust in your hard work and abilities. He wants you to put your trust in Him. Working diligently is a remarkable thing. However, trusting fully in your diligence to bring positive results from your work is not a wise thing. Some people spend so much time in their secular work that they fail to get time to spend with God and their families. Unfortunately, they are discouraged when they fail to see their painstaking efforts blossoming.

God gives His beloved sleep.

One musician may be working so hard trying to produce creative out of the box styles to write and produce a hit song. He gets devastated when the music he has been working on fails to top the

charts or fails to sell. Another musician may be spending quality time studying and sharing God's Word, then God ends up giving him a song in a dream while he is asleep, and the song ends up impacting a multitude of lives and bringing him success that he had not imagined before. God gives His beloved sleep.

Having spent time with God, Prophet Elijah possibly understood this divine principle. He understood that God was able to sustain him even in the most challenging circumstances and even if He does not, he would still serve Him. Therefore, he embarked on God's assignment, worrying less about where he was going to get his next meal. God gives His beloved sleep. God makes ways where there was no way. God bestowed blessings upon Elijah by sending him to the Cherith brook to drink from it and commanded the ravens to feed him there. Divine intervention goes beyond human intention and imagination.

The God of Infinite Strategies

1 Kings 17:7-10 (KJV) – "[7] And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. [8] And the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, [9] Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

"This woman was not an Israelite. She had never had the privileges and blessings that the chosen people of God had enjoyed; but she was a believer in the true God and had walked in all the light that was shining on her pathway. And now, when there was no safety for Elijah in the land of Israel, God sent him to this woman to find an asylum in her home." - Prophets and Kings, Page 129.2, Ellen G. White.

When unfortunate events attack our ability to put a meal on the table like losing a job, we feel so discouraged. When we fail an interview for a dream job in a dream organization, we feel hopeless. When a business deal does not go positively as envisioned, we may get so disheartened.

Most times, the stress we face when such circumstances happen to us is due to our limitations. We are limited in our views and as a result we want to limit God to fit in our plans and aspirations. One may be looking for a job at an international Non-Governmental Organization with a

comfortable paycheck but maybe God wants that person to open their own Global Non-Profit Organization.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV) - "[8] For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The distance between heaven and earth is unfathomable. Comparing our ways and thoughts in light to God's is incomprehensible. That is why I encourage you to spend sufficient time studying the Bible so that your mind can be elevated as it attempts to reach the Creator's infinite mind. Bible study will give you infinite divine ideas and strategies because the Word of God wants to make you the first and not the last. It wants to put you above only and not beneath (Deuteronomy 28:13).

Rarely do we understand beyond what we have already seen. Things that have not yet been seen can be quite difficult to understand. This is why we are told to apply faith first before we understand (Hebrews 11:3). This is because as created beings, what we have seen is microscopically so little when compared to what we have not yet seen.

Therefore, we should trust that God is going to fulfill the promise He has given us without worrying about how (the methodology) He is going to do it. We should be open to the mysteries that God wants to marvel our eyes and minds with as He follows miracle after miracle in our journey of faith.

Unlike most of us, Elijah did not complain to God when the brook dried up. Instead, he stuck on the divine assignment which afterward yielded divine blessing when God sent him to a widow to feed him there. Most people are waiting for God to give them connections with high-profile people, because they think that is where their blessing lies.

One of the reasons you should treat everyone with honor is because God can use anybody. More often than not, He uses everybody. The way one should treat their most respected celebrity or star is the same way one ought to treat the least respected in society.

Matthew 25:40 (KJV) - "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

God did not send Elijah to a king. He had previously reproved the king. Many people, when given an assignment to tell our leaders the truth, they will pull back as a result of fearing the consequences. One may wonder how they can correct a Senior Church Elder and he is the one contributing the most offering. One may wonder, if they reprove a leader which land would they run away to because he or she is the head of that particular place. Elijah feared not. He cared for other people's needs more than he cared for his own needs.

God sent Elijah to get his help from a widow. Widows usually struggle financially because the provider of the home on whom everybody depended on is dead. God sending Elijah to get sustainability help from a widow is like sending someone to find shelter from a homeless person. It is like sending someone to get food from a hungry person.

Elijah did not question God. He did exactly what God had commanded him. Through the lack of faith, we bypass most of our divine blessings when we look down on the very ones whom God has sent our way to help us. We sometimes even get depressed because those whom we thought would help us have not assisted us. Such situations call for the application of simple faith and in this case, it is treating everybody with respect like Elijah did.

God never runs out of strategies/methods of doing what He intends to do. That makes Him very interesting. The Bible, which most Christians assume to be boring, surpasses all forms of worldly entertainment combined. The imaginative and the deep reader when studying the Bible will uncover treasures that they never knew existed. Joy and peace will be cultivated in their hearts as they cherish the divinely inspired pages of the Bible.

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The Widow's Oil and Flour Miracle

1 Kings 17:10-16 (KJV) – “[10] So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. [11] And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. [12] And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son,

that we may eat it, and die. [13] And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. [14] For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. [15] And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. [16] And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah."

Elijah obeyed God's Word immediately and went to the city of Zarephath. Zarephath is mentioned as a location where the prophet Elijah was sent during a time of drought and famine. It is described as being located near Sidon, which was a coastal city in ancient Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon).

Elijah asked the widow to give her water to drink then he asked her for food to eat. By making this request to her, Elijah gave her the opportunity and privilege to do a good deed. His request left the widow with no choice but to exercise her faith in God. The assignments that God will often give us are assignments that demand us to exercise faith. Usually, blessings often lie in wait after conducting those assignments.

We should be knowledgeable of God's Word so that we can know when God speaks through people as God will use various means to speak with us. However, whichever way He chooses to use is always in line with His Word. Elijah gave the lady an assignment of faith. He gave her the golden opportunity to be blessed and to be a blessing.

"In this poverty-stricken home the famine pressed sore, and the pitifully meager fare seemed about to fail. The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities. But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him." - Prophets and Kings, Page 130.1, Ellen G. White.

I often hear people say, there are no opportunities where they are currently. Opportunities are everywhere for God's children. In case you do not know, I would like you to know that any chance one gets of doing good is an opportunity to receive God's blessings. Our lives are not fueled by

the level of skills, talents, and capacity we hold; they are fueled by God's blessings. We miss divine blessings when we fail to do what God has told us to do.

In His endless love, sometimes God will bring that assignment to us over and over again so that we don't miss what He has in store for us through that assignment. For instance, God might be wanting you to join the Church choir or the praise and worship team because He has a hidden blessing for you there.

A certain advertisement might be showing up to you innumerable times because God wants you to take hold of the opportunity that is in there. Other times, you might find yourself continually in the listening of certain conversations by different people that convey a specific idea to you. These conversations keep bombarding you. For example, you may find conversations concerning the true Sabbath seem to be always following you. It will be of great help to you if you can discern such opportunities and move by faith like the widow of Zarephath.

Like Elijah, people of God ought to give people the opportunity to be blessed and to be a blessing. When given work to do for God, we should give others the opportunity to help us so that they too may receive a blessing. Some of us have the spiritual understanding that service to God results in blessings, which is true. Therefore, we want to do all the work by ourselves so that we can get the full blessings.

We should not be selfish with God's blessings. There are many people who are willing to assist and are waiting for someone to give them a chance. If you are in the position of giving them a chance, do not deny them an opportunity to get blessed. Reach out to people, young and old, with no fear of rejection. If you get rejected you will have nothing to regret compared to if you did not try.

One Sunday afternoon, I gave Christian a call to find out how he was doing. Christian is one of the teens I teach and mentor in church (fun fact: I have mentored three people called Christian in one church). When I gave Christian a call, it reached a point that I started quoting Bible verses during the conversation. When Christian saw that I have started quoting verses, he went out of the house and called his neighbors and relatives to come and listen to that call. He called around six people who came and heard God's Word.

Luke 6:12-13 (KJV) – "[12] And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [13] And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles;"

Jesus chose His 12 apostles after He had prayed all night. Being God, He would have done the entire work of spreading the gospel alone but He did not. This is because He wanted to give other people the opportunity to join Him in His work. They witnessed Him living according to what He preached. They watched Him getting rejected and how He handled that rejection. They saw Him love and forgive the people who hated Him the most. They saw Him practice righteousness at all times, even in the most trying circumstances. Jesus being flesh like them gave them hope and made them realize that it was possible to be a light in this dark world and to be salt amid the tastelessness that is in this world.

We may be doing a very tedious work but when we do it alone, other people might not see how difficult the task we are undertaking is because they did not take part in it. That may be the reason some people make crazy demands.

For example, when you do not involve your child in your money-making process to see and take part in it, the child may make so many demands to you that involve using money to buy unnecessary things. This is because he or she assumes that making money is easy. Therefore, they feel that whatever they ask from you, you have the ability to buy. This can make some children and some people to feel some sense of entitlement.

Some parents believe that involving children on issues to do with money at an early age will corrupt their minds. When you give your child everything they ask for, including what is harmful to them, it may corrupt their minds and may make them to be entitled and dependent on people. However, when you teach them at an early age on the process of making money, sometimes working together with them, they will highly likely be more responsible in future.

Such children will probably learn to exercise frugality and will also learn on how to grow the money that they earn. Such training is possible and more flexible when a parent is self-employed or owns a business than when a parent is employed because in employment there might be restrictions on bringing one's children to work. A child who does not do house chores and has the

parents doing everything for them, may end up treating the parents with contempt. However, one who is involved with house chores will most likely treat the parents with high-level respect.

When Jesus involved His disciples in assisting Him in the work of spreading the gospel, they were able to see how heavy but noble that work was. Elijah acted like an open window to the widow of Zarephath and allowed God's blessings to flow through her by asking her to give him water to drink and food to eat. Obeying God's Word through His servant Elijah caused the widow's food to increase. The food that was meant to be enough for only one meal ended up being more than enough for the other days.

Resurrection of the Widow's Son

1 Kings 17:17-23 (KJV) – "[17] And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. [18] And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? [19] And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. [20] And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also

brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? [21] And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. [22] And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. [23] And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth."

A genuine man of God turns bad situations into good situations. Inviting genuine people of God to our homes translates to inviting blessings. If Elijah had not been there, probably the widow's son would have died and not resurrected. Being close in proximity or in relation to a person of faith is a priceless asset. If you are standing or sitting next to them, they may be praying for you without your knowledge. If you are their friend or family member, they will be constantly bringing blessings to you.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2. These words have lost none of their force through the lapse of time. Our heavenly Father still continues to place in the pathway of His children opportunities that are blessings in disguise; and those who improve these opportunities find great joy. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Isaiah 58:10, 11." - Prophets and Kings, Page 132.1, Ellen G. White.

"To His faithful servants today Christ says, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." No act of kindness shown in His name will fail to be recognized and rewarded. And in the same tender recognition Christ includes even the feeblest and lowliest of the family of God. "Whosoever shall give to drink," He says, "unto one of these little ones"—those who are as children in their faith and their knowledge of Christ—"a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matthew 10:40, 42." - Prophets and Kings, Page 132.2, Ellen G. White.

John 11:3 (KJV) - "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus telling Him that his friend Lazarus whom He loves is sick. They sent this message to Him because they knew that Jesus has the ability to turn around that situation for the good. They were facing a challenge and that challenge was that their brother was sick. People find it easier telling a Godly person their problems than telling other people. This is because a Godly person is kind, understanding, will not judge them and will give them the best solutions.

John 11:21 (NKJV) - "Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'"

Martha told Jesus that if He had been there Lazarus would not have died. In other words, what she was saying was Lazarus died because Jesus was not close to them in proximity. This means that the closer you get to God, the more blessed your life becomes. Getting close to people of God should be more valued than getting close to your favorite celebrity or politician.

Some of your favorite celebrities may look down on you when you meet them because you are glorifying and uplifting them. They may make you leave that place with feelings of hatred and disappointment. A genuine converted child of God cannot do that because God has placed humility in their hearts.

Matthew 9:19-21 (KJV) – "[19] And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. [20] And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: [21] For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."

The woman knew if she touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be made whole. In other words, she knew that if she got close to Jesus she would get well. Jesus was awed by this rare faith and healed her immediately.

The problems we are facing would vanish if we would get close enough to God. When Jesus passed by the woman's town, the woman with an issue of blood for twelve years was close to Jesus but not close enough because Jesus was passing by in her town. Jesus passed through the crowd that she was in. Still, she was not close enough to Him. She went behind Jesus meaning she moved closer. Being behind Jesus meant that she was quite close but still not close enough. It was only when she touched the hem of His garment that she was made whole. We may be thinking that we

are close to Jesus and sometimes we may be blaming God for not turning around our terrible situations. The questions we should ask ourselves is, are we close enough to God?

When the woman touched the hem of Jesus' garments, she did not leave any small space between Jesus and herself. How much space have we left between ourselves and Christ? The Devil does not need a huge space to damage our lives. He needs a small opening the size of a needle piercing to do the havoc he intends to. For he knows that once he gets through that small opening, he will do his best to widen it to a point that seems impossible to repair.

The woman understood that when she saw Jesus passing by in the area that she was in, she was not close enough. Some of us think that we are close enough to God because we go to church every Saturday and spend the entire Sabbath in church while we spend the rest of the week doing our own pleasure.

The woman knew that by getting right behind the Savior she was not close enough. Some of us think that by going to church on Sabbath, attending Bible study sessions four days a week, returning tithes and offerings faithfully, and fasting once a month we are close enough to God. You still need to pull closer. Other disciples were close to Jesus but John was the only one who laid on Jesus' bosom. He made sure that he was close enough to Jesus. The woman knew that she had to pull closer and that is why she ensured that her hand came to contact with the hem of His garment. Through this, she received her most desired blessing.

Having the disease troubling her for twelve years meant that she had been seeking solutions to get healing as she was constantly writhing in pain. She might have prayed so hard and did everything that God had told her to in that she had probably reached a point of giving up. God gave her the opportunity by bringing Jesus right next to where she was. She did not hesitate; she reached out to Him to touch the hem of His garment.

If the widow had invited Elijah for the first day and failed to stay with him for the other subsequent days, she would have received the oil and flour miracle but would not have had her son raised from the dead. It was by abiding closely with the man of God that her son was resurrected from the dead. We should abide closely with God, leaving no space between us and Him and not letting Him go.

John 15:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches:

He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

The more you abide in God, the more you will bring forth good fruit. Abiding by God will make miracles a part and parcel of your lifestyle. Just when you think God has given you everything you need, you realize that He has not yet started. This will happen only if you abide in Him and He abides in you. Without God we can do nothing (John 15:5). In other words, with God you can do everything.

John 15:8 (KJV) – "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

God is glorified when you bear fruit in abundance. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that He wants you to bear fruit. God does not specify the amount of fruit that He wants you to bear because He does not want to limit you. God wants you to go above and beyond your limits. God limits no one. Human beings are the ones who limit themselves.

John 15:7 (KJV) – "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The secret to answered prayers is abiding by God. God wants to say yes to your prayers. He does not want you to lack any good thing. However, the condition He gives to you is to allow His words to abide in you. This is because God is obligated to His Word and God's Word will guide you on what to ask for in prayer. Closeness to God is fostered when one studies, understands, meditates, memorizes, and applies God's Word by Faith. It was through obedience to God's Word that the widow received the oil and flour miracle. It was through obedience to God's Word by abiding with Elijah (a man of God) that she got her dear son resurrected.

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The Newly Baptized

We should take note that Elijah did not leave the widow by herself after blessing her with the food that she needed. When people accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior and we baptize them, we should not count it an achievement and leave them to walk the Christian journey alone. We should be happy that they have achieved that milestone and realize that the journey does not end there. So, we should take it upon ourselves to walk with them daily.

Newly baptized people are on the Devil's radar. Satan watches them closely and attacks them with stronger demons than he did before. He may attack them with diseases and calamities to discourage them. The temptations he will present to them will be of a stronger magnitude than those he brought upon them before. Therefore, some people will lose hold and fall out of the faith. If the church did a statistic on how many people remained committed to God after they were baptized, they would realize that those who held tightly to Jesus is a very small minority.

We are often deceived to believe that because someone has been baptized that person is okay and they need no more help. Therefore, we leave them to fight the spiritual battle on their own as we go to look for new converts. The circle continues and we wonder how comes the church does not gain much strength even though it keeps on baptizing more people.

Romans 1:16 (KJV) - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

The Bible says in Romans 1:16, "to the Jews first." The Jews represents believers while the Greeks represent unbelievers. In the great gospel commission, God has called us to teach all nations and to convert new people to Him (Matthew 28:19-20). However, Paul through the inspiration of God tells us in Romans 1:16 that we need to minister to believers first. This is because believers need Christ as much as unbelievers. Believers need to hear God's Word as much as unbelievers. No created being has reached a level that they no longer need God.

Why should we minister to believers first? Any good and successful work should start from inside before it goes outside. It was when Moses had spent time with God on the mount, having God's instructions sink deep in him that he came to the public and everybody noticed that his face was shining. Inner beauty affects outward appearance. However, outward appearance does not always reflect inner beauty. The most important component of a vehicle is the engine which is hidden inside. Before an orator speaks and before an author writes, they have to plan the message that they wish to convey from inside. They have to think first before they do the action. This does not just happen with authors and orators but with people in every line of work.

Therefore, we need to concentrate first on the inside job before the outside job. Strong buildings are not defined by their outward appearance or their lofty heights. Strong buildings are defined by the strength of their foundation. When looking at a building, you will only see the outward

appearance and you will not see the foundation. It is when storms and other natural calamities come that you will be able to determine the strength of that foundation. When we focus on the inside and make our house, which is the church strong from inside, it will attract more people from outside.

When believers are empowered through the teaching of God's Word, people from outside will look at how strong they are and how blessed they are that they will automatically want to join the church. A Christian life should be the best reflection of the blessedness that comes with keeping God's commandments.

Muslims barely do evangelism but people are attracted to their religion because of how strong they are and how firmly they are grounded in their beliefs. This makes some Christians want to dress like them and even adapt Arabic words in their speech. This causes many to convert to their system of belief. Outreach is good and it should be conducted but we should not do it at the expense of our internal nourishment as a church.

Leaving the newly baptized to fend for themselves is like leaving new born babies to feed themselves. As much as newborn babies are hungry and their bodies need food to eat, they do not have the capacity to feed themselves. The woman received the oil and flour miracle through Elijah but she had not developed her faith to the level of raising the dead.

If Elijah had left her by herself, she would have probably lost faith in God the moment her son died. Staying with Elijah aided in strengthening her faith in the Highest, all-powerful God. She was able to learn more of God's abilities as she realized that God was able to do more than increasing the food in her store.

Some may say that as long as the newly baptized people know where the church is, have a Bible and some spiritual books, they are safe. New born babies can have food and drink right next to them but they fail to eat and drink. Someone can go to church for years and fail to hear a sermon that speaks directly to them. Therefore, they may resolve to conclude, "This church is not for me, it is for them." Someone may have the Bible with them but they do not know how to study it and where to start in their studies. Therefore, we need a more personalized approach when ministering to new converts and fellow believers.

I saw something in Syokimau Central Seventh Day Adventist Church, Kenya that amazed me. At the end of the camp meeting, the newly baptized people were called to the front of the church and the pastor left it open for whoever wanted to minister to each one of them to come to the pulpit and stand behind the one they wanted to minister to.

Some churches may have a similar model but they leave that work to Church Elders only while some leave it to registered members only. We should note that Church Elders form the minority of the church's population and they are human beings. Therefore, there is only so much that they can handle. We should know that closeness to God is not defined by the level of position one holds in a church or the title that they possess.

There are laymen who hold no title and no position who are fully committed to God. Limiting that work to registered members only may limit visiting members from ministering to those they would want to serve. One may be a devoted Christian but a visitor to that church or a non-registered member who frequents that church.

God may have instilled a special feeling of connection or calling to a specific person in that congregation. Therefore, when the church limits the work of ministering to individual newly baptized people to those who are registered members, they are limiting God's work. Elijah was sent to minister to a stranger and he ministered to her while he was a visitor in her house.

I am not a registered member of Syokimau Central Seventh Day Adventist Church but when they called people who would like to walk the faith journey with the newly baptized people, I stood up and went forward. Some people ridiculed me and asked me how I am going to minister to that person and I do not frequent that church. What they did not know is that I have a blog with Christian devotional articles which I could be sending daily to that person. Secondly, I have a phone that I can use to call him and thirdly, I can still physically visit that church.

We should do evangelism and bring more people to church. However, we should not focus too much on the outsiders and fail to focus on the insiders. We need the insiders as much as we need the outsiders.

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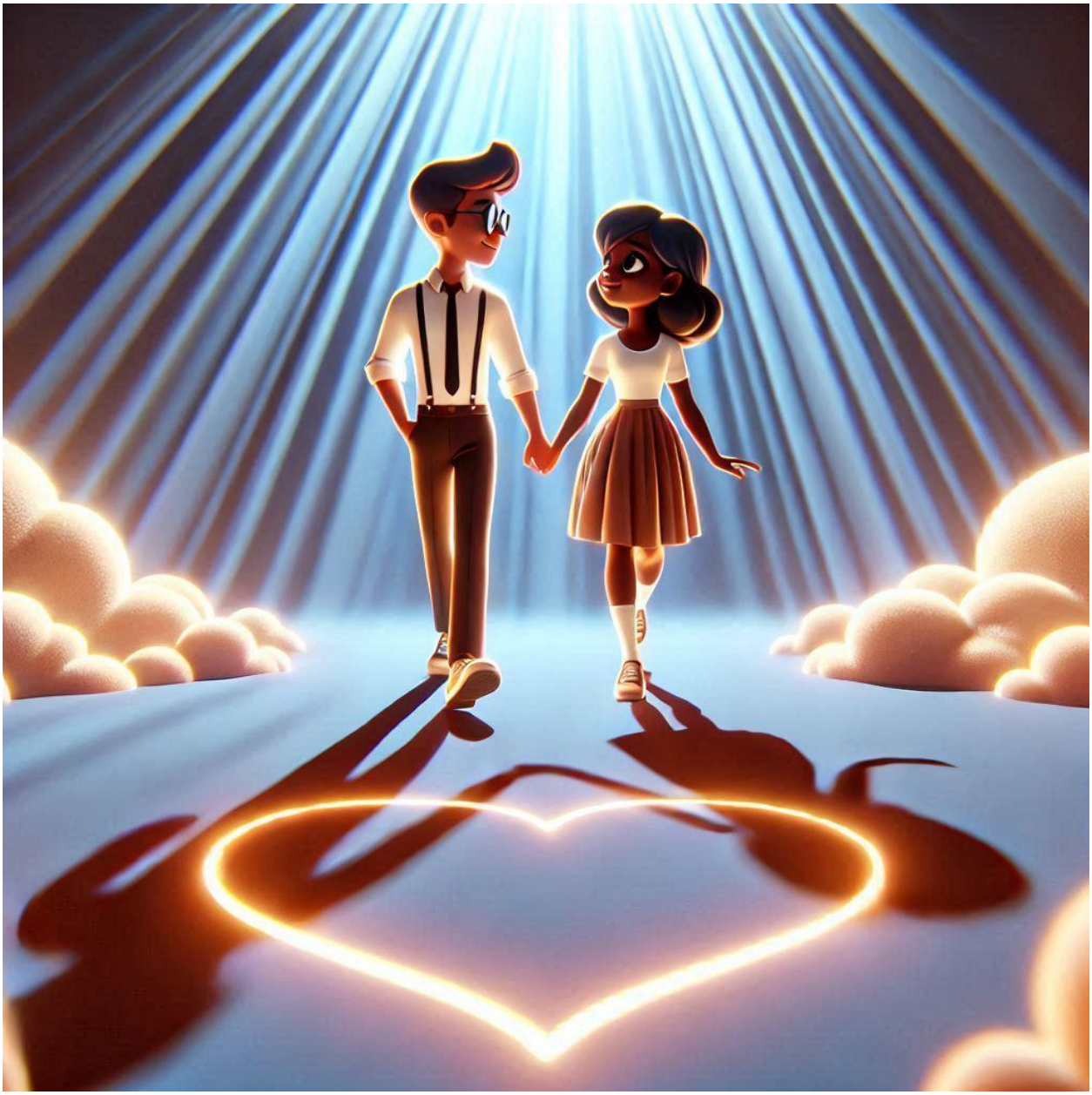
The Newly Married



Genesis 2:21-24 (KJV) - "[21] And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; [22] And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. [23] And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [24] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Genesis 1:28 (KJV) - "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

There are two institutions listed in the account of creation, which are listed as blessed and which God made holy. One is the Sabbath and the other one is marriage. Satan has tried his best to attack these two. In its infant stages he attacks marriages because that is when the bonds are weak and the foundations have not been built properly to withstand the storms of life.

One way he attacks marriages is by making sure the spouses are too busy to spend time with each other, particularly the husband. The husband with good intentions acknowledges that he has new responsibilities as he has a new person that he needs to provide for compared to previously when he had to provide for himself alone. Therefore, as any normal person would, he resolves to work harder to get more income to provide for the family. It is here that Satan comes with all sorts of attacks.

First, the enemy will try to prevent the man from keeping the Sabbath day holy by promising him extra pay on Saturday. I have heard some people say that it is on Saturday when they get most clients and it is on that holy Sabbath day when they make more money. Therefore, making it hard for them to keep the Sabbath day holy. If the family has children, they will rarely find time to bring them to church and will rarely get time to cultivate their spiritual lives.

As the man is busy looking for money to feed his family, the Devil may bring temptations at his workplace. He may bring another woman (who sometimes might be more physically attractive than the wife or has something impressive in her personality or character or has none of the above) to seduce that man. It will not take long before the two of them start having an extra-marital affair.

As the wife is lonely at home since her husband is too busy for her, Satan may start showing her options of other men who are available who are closer to her. The man might be the house guard or the gardener or someone else within the neighborhood. The man might be of a lower standard than the husband but is available. This can be seen when Eve met a serpent the few moments that she was not together with Adam.

In Genesis 1:28, God gave human beings dominion over all the animals, including the serpent. Eve was deceived by the serpent and fell into its trap. In other words, Eve lost her loyalty to God by

heeding the advice of a creature that was lower than her, lower than her husband and lower than God. Some men are usually afraid that their wives might cheat on them with men who have more money than them or who are more powerful than them. This is not always the case. Sometimes, the lady will be involved in an extra-marital affair with a man lower in status than her spouse, mostly because he is more available than her husband.

Genesis 2:24 (KJV) - "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

The word "cleave" is translated from the Hebrew word "דָּבַק" (dabaq), which is pronounced as "daw-bak."

The root of the word "dabaq" carries the following meanings and connotations:

Cleave/Adhere/Join: The primary meaning of "dabaq" is to cling, stick, or adhere closely to something. It signifies a strong and intimate attachment or bonding.

Follow closely/Join together: In the context of marriage, "dabaq" implies a deep and committed relationship between a husband and wife, where they become closely united or joined together as one.

Pursue diligently: "Dabaq" can also convey the idea of pursuing something diligently or persistently, emphasizing the commitment and effort required to maintain a strong marital bond.

In Genesis 2:24, "cleave" (or "dabaq") signifies the deep and intimate connection between a man and his wife, emphasizing their commitment to each other and their union as one flesh in marriage.

The Bible says, “They shall be one flesh.” I like to think of it in the context of members of a body. At no single time, unless interrupted by an external force do the members of a body leave each other. You cannot see the hand saying, “let me leave the body for a while, I go do my own things and then I will come back.” They are always together. Try as much as possible to be together with your spouse.

Entrepreneurship offers a good platform for spending time together as the two of you will be able to work together on the family business. However, if you are in employment or conducting other duties that might separate you two, ensure that after you finish those duties you spend the rest of the time with your spouse. The best way that any two or more people can spend time together is

in engaging in the study of God's Word. God's Word created the marriage bond and it is God's Word alone that is able to sustain it. Spouses should abide by each other more closer than how Elijah abided by the widow of Zarephath.

A True Man of God

1 Kings 17:24 (KJV) - "And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

The woman acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God when he resurrected her son. A man of God is able to do things that others cannot do. Genesis 41:38-39 (KJV) - "[38] And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? [39] And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art." In the entire land of Egypt, Pharaoh had never met such a man as Joseph. The sorcerers, magicians and wizards in that land could not equal Joseph's ability. Joseph was able to do something that nobody else in Egypt could do.

God wants you to stand out, that is why He calls you the light of the world. Joseph was not the only person in the Bible that was seen with preeminently unique abilities. We can see this with Moses when he stood before Pharaoh and while the magicians made serpents with their rods as he did. His serpent ate all the others because it was more superior as it was backed up by the power of God. Magicians in the land of Egypt tried reversing some of the plagues but they could not do it because their power has limits while God's power is limitless.

The best men of power (magicians, wizards, sorcerers, astrologers etc.) in the land of Babylon could not tell and interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams but Daniel could do it. God is all powerful and when we collaborate with Him and acknowledge Him, He works with us hand in hand with his omnipotence making our light so shine before men.

Matthew 7:18-20 (KJV) – "[18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The Bible tells us that we shall know whether a person is good or bad by the fruits they bear. Good fruits are good internally and externally. Bad fruits may look good from the outside but are not good on the inside. Someone may take fruit that is ripe and sweet and inject it with poison and the eater will not notice till they are harmed and sometimes they may fail to notice what is harming them.

Fruits that are good not only look good but they also nourish. Their positive effects are long lasting as well. A tasty fruit that is poisoned may be sweet for a moment but the after effects are dreadful. Genesis 3:6 (KJV) - "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." The fruit that Eve partook, looked good from the outside but it was a forbidden fruit. God is everlasting. Therefore, He works in us to produce from us fruits that have positive everlasting effects.

When Elijah stayed with the widow, her son got ill and died. The widow thought that Elijah had come to bring her bad luck. She had probably forgotten the oil and flour miracle. God might have brought continuous blessings to our lives, then one day when calamity befalls us, we forget everything that He has ever done and we start blaming Him like the Israelites in the wilderness.

We should know that when God is for us, no one and nothing can successfully stand against us (Romans 8:31). God has power over every form of evil including death. Satan can perform various miracles including healing chronic illnesses that he has placed upon his victims but he cannot give life because God is life and all life is dependent on God.

The widow felt discouraged that she had lost two most important men in her life, her husband, and her son. When she lost her son, she probably felt that all hope was gone. It was at this moment that God stepped in and through his servant Elijah, the widow’s son was raised from the dead. The widow acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God because Elijah did something that no other power could do besides God.

Through His servant Elijah, God brought life to the lifeless. A man of God brings life into lifeless situations. As a Christian you should be intentional in bringing life because you are a follower of Jesus Christ who is Life. In every situation, ask yourself how you are going to collaborate with God and bring life to it.

You are a teacher and, in your classroom, there is a student who is always failing in exams. Are you going to kill their ambitions and dreams by insulting them and discouraging them or are you going to bring life to them by encouraging them, giving them hope and giving life to their ambitions? Elijah was used by God to give hope to the widow who had lost all hope.

I was thirteen years old in class eight (grade 8) in Laiser Hill Academy. The headmaster's (of the primary section) name was Mr. Dick Joel Omondi. He was our English teacher too. He was always in the habit of encouraging students. Unlike the average academic teacher who advocates for focus on academics only, he continuously encouraged us to pursue our talents. One day, he told us to write poems and present them at the assembly (parade) in front of the whole school (kindergarten, primary and high school). Through that assignment, I discovered I have a poetic talent. I am extremely grateful for his constant encouragement.

I was six years old in class one (grade 1) in a primary school in Nairobi, Kenya called Highway Educational Complex. Mrs. Omach was the class teacher and was teaching us all subjects at the time. As she was teaching us Swahili, she gave an example and asked a question that was closely related to the example. She gave an opportunity to whoever knows the answer to go and write it on the blackboard. I felt that I had the answer in mind but started doubting myself because no one raised up their hand.

The reason I doubted is because at that time I was an average student in terms of class position. Out of around twenty students, I used to be in position twelve or ten. Therefore, I asked myself, if everybody else from position one to nine did not have the answer, what makes me think that my answer is correct? However, something inside me told me to go and write the answer on the blackboard. Therefore, I raised my hand and went and wrote it.

After I wrote it, she was so amazed and to my surprise she said that my answer was correct. She went ahead and applauded me and said, "You are so clever." I did not understand what she meant by that because to me the answer seemed so obvious. Keep in mind that what is obvious to you may not be obvious to someone else.

From that day onwards, she began saying that I am intelligent, telling everybody including the other teachers that this kid (me) is very intelligent. I did not know how that statement affected me till a few years back when I reflected on it having grown in the knowledge of psychology and the

subconscious mind. What happened is I improved from being in position twelve or ten to position six in the middle of the year.

During the end of year exams in 1999, I became position one. Unfortunately, she was not there to witness me rising to the first rank. She had probably transferred to another school. I felt good that I was in position one but felt bad that she was not there. Those who were in the top three positions in all classes at the end of year exams were given prizes in the end year ceremony. In that particular year, they were giving fiber tip colors whereby the one who held the first position would get the largest.

Unfortunately, after I got mine, they got lost/stolen the very same day. Also, that was the only time I received a physical gift from school for passing school tests. In the succeeding years, I was normally on the top three in my school examinations, being in position one and two most of the time. However, the school chose to award certificates for the ones who held the top three positions instead of gifts. I will forever be grateful to that teacher because God used her to unlock a hidden potential in me. Like Elijah, God used her to bring life to what seemed lifeless.

Adrian Enock was the first person to call me his role model. This happened when I visited him at their home and had a conversation with him and his family. Adrian is one of my mentees as he is one of the students I teach in the teens class. He always makes an effort to foster a close relationship with me. He has taught me to do the same to my teachers and other people to whom I look up. Whenever I face life's obstacles and doubt if I can get through them, I always remember that Adrian called me his role model. That thought alone gives me strength as I do not want to let my mentees like him down. Adrian was used by God to bring life to events in my life which may have seemed to be dying.

I was teaching the teenagers occasionally in the April Vocational Bible Study at Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church this year (2024). We were having a games class which was called River of Life. The teenagers were the ones required to participate in the games while the teachers supervised them. Hula hoops were present as part of the game. The teens were involved in a competition which required them to do the hula hoops either on the waist, the neck or the hand. I was moving around in various groups seeing what they were doing.

While I was visiting one group, I decided to give the hula hoop a try. I knew I could not do the waist and neck one so I tried the hand one which I thought was easier. One reason I chose to do it is because sometimes students have painted a perfect picture of the teacher in their heads and some usually think that because the teacher is a master in one thing, he is a master in everything. One of my motives was to show them that there are things which they can do that I cannot.

I tried doing the hand hula hoop (which I thought was easy) about five times and I was not able to do it. I could see on the faces of the students in that group, they were trying hard not to laugh. In a soft voice one student in that group named Tatyana told me, “Teacher, you can do it.” This statement made me believe that what I thought was impossible was indeed possible. For I thought within myself, “If she believes in me, why should I not believe in myself?”

That simple short statement from her gave me a new sense of confidence. After she said that, another student named Aaron in that group, gave me instructions on how to do it. I decided to give the hand hula hoop one more attempt and surprisingly, I was able to do it. If it were not for those two, I do not think I would have been able to do it. God used them to bring life to a lifeless situation.

Jesus and Elijah – True Son of God, True man of God

Matthew 27:54 (KJV) - "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."

In the Bible, certain moments stand out as pivotal acknowledgments of divine presence and authority. Two such moments are the centurion's proclamation at the crucifixion of Jesus and the widow's acknowledgment of Elijah as a man of God. These instances, though separated by centuries and circumstances, are united in their profound recognition of God's power manifest in His servants. God is the same always, He never changes (Hebrews 13:8). If the widow was able to say that Elijah was truly a man of God and the centurion was able to say that Jesus is truly the Son of God, people looking at you should be able to say the same thing when they witness God’s power in your life.

The Golgotha scene is one of intense drama and divine revelation. As Jesus breathes His last, the earth trembles, the sky darkens, and the veil of the temple is torn in two. These supernatural events accompany the crucifixion, culminating in the centurion's awe-filled declaration. A Roman soldier, representative of the very authority that sanctioned Jesus' death, the centurion's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God is both significant and surprising. It marks a moment where an outsider, not previously a follower of Jesus, discerns the divine nature of the one crucified.

In contrast, the widow of Zarephath's recognition of Elijah comes after a period of personal interaction and miraculous provision. During a time of severe drought and famine, Elijah is used by God to provide food that does not run out and later raises the widow's son from the dead. These acts convince her that Elijah is indeed a man of God, as she exclaims, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24, KJV). Her acknowledgment is born out of personal experience and a series of miraculous interventions in her life.

Both recognitions are precipitated by miraculous events. For the centurion, it is the cosmic disturbances and the manner of Jesus' death that prompt his declaration. For the widow, it is the miraculous provision of food and the resurrection of her son. These events surpass ordinary experiences and point to a higher power at work. This is because God is not an ordinary God. That is why He calls His children a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9).

"We are afraid to do what is right because doing what's right makes me look funny. But Jesus said, "Yes, you are a peculiar people."”- Pastor Randy Skeete.

When we try not to be extraordinary so that we can fit in the crowd we are not appreciating how uniquely God created us to be. We are blurring the beauty that is found in diversity instead of amplifying it. The uniqueness placed inside you by God is meant to attract people to you. It is like an attraction site that people visit to see the unique attraction that is in it.

People will go to various national parks to see various species of animals that are not all found in one national park. One can travel thousands of miles from the United States of America where there are national parks but there are no wild populations of lions to Africa to see lions. The Great Wall of China which is an attraction site in China, is different from Machu Picchu in Peru and they

are both different from the Eiffel Tower in France. Someone can travel to these three different sites just to see their uniqueness.

As a child of God, you should be so different that people should be willing to go out of their way to have an encounter with you just as the Queen of Sheba traveled a long distance to meet King Solomon. People who know their purpose and follow God's direction in pursuing it get paid highly for who they are. Their uniqueness causes them to get paid as they are able to bless people with it. Nobody would pay them highly if they were like everybody else. God created you to stand out, not to fit in.

In both narratives of Jesus and Elijah, the acknowledgments highlight the authority and power of God manifest through His representatives. The centurion sees Jesus Christ not merely as a crucified man but as the divine Son of God. Similarly, the widow sees Elijah not just as a prophet but as a true man of God, speaking the very words of the Lord. These recognitions underscore the divine authority inherent in Elijah and Christ.

Interestingly, both acknowledgments come from individuals who might be considered outsiders. The centurion was a Roman soldier, not a follower of Jesus, and likely unfamiliar with Jewish Messianic expectations. The widow is a Gentile from Zarephath, outside the Israel community. Their recognitions remind readers that God's revelation is not limited to insiders or the religiously educated. Instead, divine truth can be discerned by anyone, regardless of background, when faced with undeniable demonstrations of God's power.

Joshua 2:9-11 (KJV) - "[9] And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. [10] For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. [11] And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

Rahab told the men that she knew that God had given them the land. Rahab was from a place that the inhabitants including herself did not believe in God and she was a prostitute. She said when they heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the red Sea for them and what happened to the two

kings of the Amorites, their hearts melted and all courage resident in all the men of the land was lost. She acknowledged that the God of the Israelites is the true God and He is the one who rules everywhere. Outsiders should be able to see God in you if you are a true man of God.

Both the widow and the centurion realize that Jesus and Elijah are sent by God through direct personal experience. The centurion witnesses the extraordinary events surrounding Jesus' death, leading him to his profound declaration. The widow experiences God's provision and the raising of her son firsthand, which transforms her understanding of Elijah and his God. These personal experiences highlight how witnessing God's power can lead to deeper faith and acknowledgment of His servants.

Ultimately, these moments of recognition reflect the broader biblical theme of faith and revelation. The centurion's and the widow's declarations are moments of revelation where faith is either born or confirmed. They recognize God's presence and action in the world through His chosen instruments—Jesus Christ and Elijah. These moments echo throughout Scripture, where God reveals Himself to individuals in ways that transform their faith and understanding.

The centurion's proclamation at the crucifixion and the widow's acknowledgment of Elijah as a man of God are profound moments of divine recognition. Despite their different contexts, both declarations underscore the power of miraculous events to reveal divine truth, the role of outsiders in perceiving God's work, and the importance of personal experience in fostering faith. These narratives remind us that God's presence and authority are unmistakable, compelling even the most unlikely individuals to acknowledge His power and divinity. Through these stories, we see a consistent biblical theme: God's revelation is powerful, transformative, and accessible to all who witness His mighty and wonderful works.

Families to Encourage One Another

Families need to encourage each other. When a man comes home from work the last thing that he wishes to hear is discouragement from his wife. Spouses kill each other’s spirits through discouragements. Comparing your wife or your husband to other women and men respectively is a dangerous mistake.

We should understand that people are different. Therefore, it is not wise to compare one person to the other, especially in a negative light even if the two are identical twins. Conversations like, "Why don't you do for me what her husband has done for her?" Or "Why don't you be like his wife?" Should never be heard in our homes.

Some wives may wonder how comes the husband has not been able to fulfill certain promises for years despite all the nagging and the pressure they give to their husbands. Some put their husbands under pressure thinking that the pressure they mount on him will make him work harder and as a result it will produce more positive results. They are wrong. The negative pressure that they place upon their husbands make their men to feel less valued.

Negativity diminishes the energy that they have. It fights faith in the heart of their men and increases the level of doubt in their minds. Therefore, when the man goes out there to look for money, all these negative factors work hand in hand to fight against him. Usually, the negative forces working against him will overpower him, especially if he is a man who does not take time to study God's Word.

The same principle should be applied when dealing with our children. They do not have to be good in math or science like other kids. Do not make them feel useless because they are not good at something. You should understand that God has given them abilities and gifts that are unique and that they are able to outshine others using those abilities. We should encourage our children to develop a close relationship with God. We should ask the Almighty God to show them their purpose in life and to give them direction on that purpose.

If your children do something that is legal and moral and that thing takes time before it starts making money, do not mock or scorn them. If you mock them, you might be killing the very channel of blessing which God has ordained to make your family great. Do not try to force your ideas on them. Instead, listen to them, earnestly pray for them, and find out what you can do within your capacity to support them.

Many dreams among young people have unknowingly been killed by their parents who usually have the best of intentions toward them. For example, a child may have a gift in music and God has called him to be a musician. However, the process of making money out of that music takes long, maybe five to six years or more. Out of the care of the parent and some level of impatience,

the parent starts discouraging the child not to pursue that path. Instead, he gives him the suggestion of working in a bank because he is worried of how the child will pay his or her bills.

Sometimes and often, the parents will not give that suggestion calmly, they will offer it in some sort of a forceful way. What happens is the child gets discouraged and stops pursuing his or her purpose. In some instances, that child may get an alternative employment and because he does not have freedom of time to pursue his passion, he fails to make the best use of his gift and leaves as a slave for the rest of his life. The term slave may seem harsh but if you do not have the freedom to do what God has called you to, you may be earning decent money but you are living like a slave.

On the other hand, God might block all opportunities to pursue other things, especially if that child has given their all to God. God may do this because He wants them to be steadfast in their purpose. He may delay giving them money to teach them that they are not supposed to work for money (Proverbs 23:4). Instead, they are called to work for their God-given purpose and their eyes should be solely focused on that purpose.

Families should do their best to work hand in hand with God to bring life and hope to lifeless and hopeless situations just like Elijah did to the widow.

The Road to a Positive World

We live in a negative world. The darkness that is in the world is more than the light. People get discouraged in their homes, they get discouraged in school and at work. Negative speech is highly common among people who call each other friends.

Phrases like, “You can’t do it” are more common than phrases like “You can do it.” Sometimes, when you are spending time together with friends and you tell them your lofty dreams and ambitions, it is quite common for them to tell you how impossible it is rather than how possible it is.

Many people’s hopes and dreams are killed as a result of living in such an environment. As a child, before your mind gets corrupted, you see infinite possibilities. You have a wild imagination and high self-confidence believing that everything you want to do is possible. This imagination gets diminished as you grow older because you try to fit in what you and others believe is reality.

To most people reality is what they have seen. However, we should be able to acknowledge that what we have not seen is more than what we have seen. What we have all seen in the physical world is a drop in the ocean, let alone in the spiritual realm.

Those who are anti-religion and place science above spirituality may seem like they are leading people to a path of intellectualism but in essence they are leading them to a road of close-mindedness, a lower view of life, and lack of vision and foresight. They advocate for people to believe what is logical and scientifically proven. What we all know is that what is not scientifically proven is more than what is scientifically proven. The mathematical equations that have not yet been discovered are more than the ones that have been discovered.

Psalm 14:1 (KJV) - "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Why is the person who denies the existence of God called a fool? The people who reject the existence of God are called fools because they close their minds to the existence of the Infinite and Everlasting One. Doing this, causes them to lose sight of infinite and everlasting possibilities. This places a barrier in their minds and makes them not to see and think above those barriers. As a result, they will not be able to produce effective new inventions to positively transform the world.

Since they have placed science above God, the Creator of science, their knowledge in science will yield very minimal results. Some may use their scientific knowledge to produce harmful diseases and vaccines that will come in handy in bringing humanity down in a bid to make more money from their injurious practices. Them not believing in God has locked their minds and made them believe that the only way to make money is through evil. This is foolishness.

Let us reason together. If one depopulates the world through harmful vaccines, everybody dies and they end up making money, who will buy from them? They will have a lot of money but no customers and no one to associate with. Someone who robs or murders another person lacks the foresight that the person they have robbed and murdered might be the person whom God has set in their path to help them in the future.

The wise man acknowledges that God exists and by acknowledging Him in all his ways, his vision gets brightened and he opens a gate to endless possibilities. Such a person, through God's help, produces avenues to transform lives positively and he will never run short of supply because he is bringing life to lifeless situations, things, and people.

Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV) - "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." A scientist who collaborates with God, involving Him in all his dealings will produce great scientific discoveries that are going to make the world a better place. The Creator of all knowledge will show him the principles of science that are not known and have never been discovered yet. The Infinite One will show him and give him the privilege to produce infinite astonishing new inventions that will bless the world. Such a man is called wise because through aligning with God, he has aligned himself with truth. Through the godly application of truth, he has made the world a better place.

A scientist who communes with God through diligent Bible study that is empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit develops a positive mind. The Bible says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34, NKJV). Therefore, this person who has developed positive thinking through the study of God’s Word is able to speak positive words to people and his actions are positive as well, thus giving life to lifeless situations.

Nikola Tesla Serbian-American inventor, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, and futurist said, "The gift of mental power comes from God, Divine Being, and if we concentrate our minds on that truth, we become in tune with this great power."

Tesla was a scientist who professed to believe in God. He was able to produce inventions such as:

Alternating Current (AC) Electrical System: Tesla's development of the AC electrical system, including the induction motor and transformer, revolutionized the generation, transmission, and distribution of electric power. This system is still widely used today in electrical grids worldwide.

Tesla Coil: The Tesla coil is an electrical resonant transformer circuit used to produce high-voltage, low-current, high-frequency alternating-current electricity. It has applications in radio transmission, wireless energy transfer, and entertainment (such as producing spectacular electrical arcs).

Radio Remote Control: Tesla patented a remote-controlled boat in 1898, demonstrating the principles of radio wave transmission and remote control. His work laid the foundation for the development of modern remote-control technology.

Tesla Turbine: Tesla invented the Tesla turbine, a bladeless turbine design that operates on the principle of fluid viscosity and adhesion rather than traditional blades. Although not widely used commercially, the Tesla turbine has applications in various industries, including steam engines and pumps.

Wireless Transmission of Electricity: Tesla envisioned a system for wireless transmission of electricity, known as the Wardenclyffe Tower project. While the project was never completed, Tesla's work paved the way for modern wireless communication technologies.

Tesla Oscillator: Tesla patented an electromechanical oscillator that produced high-frequency mechanical vibrations, with applications in diverse fields such as machining, medicine, and even earthquake detection.

Tesla Valve: The Tesla valve is a one-way flow control device that allows fluid to flow in one direction more efficiently than in the opposite direction. It has applications in various industries, including fluid dynamics and engineering.

Tesla also said, "The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence." This statement advocates for esteeming the spiritual above the material/physical. This is a Biblical principle. Hebrews 11:3 (KJV) - "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

A breakdown of Hebrews 11:3:

"Through faith we understand": This phrase highlights the importance of faith as a lens through which believers comprehend spiritual truths, including the creation of the world.

"That the worlds were framed by the word of God": This part of the verse asserts that the universe was created by God's spoken word. It echoes the creation narrative in Genesis, where God creates the world through His spoken command.

"So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear": This final part emphasizes the divine origin of the visible world. It suggests that the material world we perceive with our senses was brought into existence from the unseen realm by God's creative power.

What Hebrews 11:3 simply tells us is the physical was created by the spiritual. Therefore, when we focus on the spiritual as Tesla said we will be able to produce great solutions and discoveries to current problems. This will bring positivity to our lives as our lives will be constantly producing positive outcomes and we will transfer that positivity to people around the world.

In his teachings, Buddha outlined eight ways in the Noble Eightfold Path in The Truth of the Path to the End of Suffering (Magga) which outlines the path leading to the cessation of suffering. He might not have been a Christian, but the eight ways are Biblical. They are: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

What message does the Bible have for Christians living in a negative world?

Matthew 5:13 (KJV) - "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

In this verse, Jesus uses the metaphor of salt to describe the influence and impact that His followers, the disciples, are to have on the world. Just as salt enhances flavor and preserves food, believers are called to bring a positive influence to the world and to preserve righteousness and truth.

By adding flavor to the widow’s life, the widow testified that Elijah was a man of God. Ask yourself, when people interact with you, can they say that you are a man of God?

The Contest on Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18:30 (KJ21) - "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down."

The Root of the Problem

Elijah called everybody to come near and he started by repairing the altar of the Lord which was broken down before all the people. By doing this, he was showing them where the problem was and by fixing God's altar, he was fixing the problem. The altar had probably been broken down by the people who shifted their allegiance from the true God to Baal. This sin resulted in the entire land facing drought. They had left the source of true blessing to focus on curses. When we shift our focus from God and worship other gods besides Him, we have shifted our focus from blessings to curses.

A true prophet shows people where the problem is. Not only does he show them where the problem is, he shows them where the root of the problem is. False prophets try to address the problem from the trunk, or the stem or the branches, they do not address it from the roots.

For example, if you visit a false prophet, he or she may tell you that the reason you are facing a certain problem in your life is because a certain family member or neighbor bewitched you. They might be right in regards to that. The false prophet usually addresses that problem by "removing" the curse placed on you by those witches and wizards.

Witches do the same thing. When you approach them, they will help you deal with the problem that you are facing by removing the spell cast on you. However, they can only be successful if the curse placed on you was placed by a witch less powerful than them. In this modern time, where Christianity is widespread, not everyone has the courage to go to a witch.

Therefore, there are some 'Christian' prophets who have disguised themselves in the name of Christianity but are using the powers of Satan. People are more susceptible to them and fall into their traps because they have hidden behind the titles of 'Bishop,' 'Prophets,' 'Reverends' etc.

Like witches, these prophets will make you believe that your life is highly dependent on them and you will begin to adore and worship them. They will not teach you on how to study God's Word and may not even encourage you to do it. If you attend their church services, most of the service is usually healing and deliverance and little focus on God's Word.

We should know that there are some of them who have staged people to act like they are healed but there are also some who perform real miracles with real power. However, the source of the

power is questionable. Matthew 24:24 (KJV) – "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." In Matthew 24:24 we see that the signs and wonders done are real but their purpose is to deceive because their source is from the master of deception.

Their work is to encourage lazy believers. Lazy believers are people who do not want to do the hard spiritual work of praying, fasting, studying the Bible, and witnessing. Therefore, they use such people as shortcuts. Secondly, such people like witches promise and often deliver instant results. However, the results they offer may come quickly but lack the right foundation to sustain them for long. God sometimes gives you fast results depending on what you have asked Him for. Sometimes, He does not give you what you have asked for immediately because He wants to prepare you for what He has in store for you.

Proverbs 10:22 (KJV) -- "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." The blessing of the Lord comes with joy, it does not come with sorrow. God's blessings are more firmly grounded compared to the Devil's gifts which are always fleeting. Therefore, it is important to wait on God for as long as He makes you wait.

Lazy believers do not know that the Word of God has solutions to all the problems they face in life. They do not know that it is possible for them to get closer to God than how pastors and bishops are close to God. They do not believe that if you believe in Jesus, one will be able to do greater things than Jesus did while He was on this earth, including raising the dead.

People who are seen carrying the Bible or who talk about God in their public conversations or who write and teach Christian material like me are often called Pastor. That shows that we live in a society where the majority of the believers are lazy. Spiritual work like being devoted to God's service, teaching God's Word and working out miracles should be common to everybody who calls themselves followers of Christ (depending on their area and capacity of gifting).

People are willing to go great lengths in working hard for material goods but are not willing to do the same for their spiritual lives. Matthew 6:31-32 (KJV) – "[31] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Even though we carry the Christian tag, our practices are similar to the ways of unbelievers. We focus on earthly work more than we focus on God's work. God's intention is for us to outshine unbelievers in everything we do but we barely do that because we focus on the same things that they focus on.

In the book, The Seven laws of Success, Herbert W. Armstrong lists seven laws of success: Fix the right goal, Education or preparation, Health, Drive, Resourcefulness, Perseverance, Having contact with and the guidance and continuous help of God. He says most successful men he has met who have gained worldly status and wealth have followed six essential laws out of the seven. The law they miss is Law No. 7 (the most important law of all), which is: Having contact with and the guidance and continuous help of God.

Unbelievers (Gentiles) may excuse themselves and say that they are unaware of the existence of God. The question is, what excuse do believers have? It is quite discouraging and somehow agonizing to see people with something that others really need but are not using. Believers have Bibles and spiritual books in their houses that are dusting on the shelves. Some have great preachers and teachers among them whom if they would take full advantage of, they would reach their most desired level.

We work so hard to advance in our careers, do numerous university degrees and professional certifications, meet and chat with successful people in our industries but do so little to advance our Spiritual lives. That might be the reason you do not know many successful Christians.

The game plan of unbelievers is to put all their energy, skills and focus to acquire material things. They have mastered this game plan so well that it is not so easy to win them replicating the same game plan. We are competing with people who can stay for more than 24 hours working. We are competing with people who have nurtured their skills and talents from a very young age. We are competing with people who are very intelligent.

I do not encourage competition and comparisons but we cannot use the same game plan as they use and expect to reach the levels they have reached or higher. What should we do then? As believers, God has created a special game plan for us.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV) - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Believers have a special game plan given to them by God. The

game plan is to put God as the sole focus, spend time with Him and all these things will just be added.

When you pull closer to God, He pulls the people and resources that you need the most towards you. When you understand this, you will never fail to keep the Sabbath holy because you have work to do or school to go to. When you understand this, you will be willing to take weeks and months off from work to serve God.

Lazy believers have weakened society in no less degree as unbelievers have. My Christian articles have received more opposition from the church than from other places. Elijah sought to show the people how to worship God in spirit and in truth. He did not do anything secretly. He repaired the altar of the Lord while the people watched. The broken altar represented a broken relationship between the people and God. Fixing it signified the amending of that broken relationship.

Elijah led by example. While he was doing that, the people were watching so that in case he is no longer there, the people can use a similar procedure in worshiping God. I used the word similar instead of same because the circumstances may be different but the solution should be similar because God never changes.

Some may face financial problems due to lack of returning tithes and offerings and giving alms while some may face financial problems due to mismanagement of their finances. These two and many other problems people face have the same root cause: a broken relationship with the Creator, the solution to all problems.

John 14:12 (KJV) - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father."

Like Elijah, Jesus encourages believers to be solely dependent on God and not man. He wants believers to do greater works than He did while He was on this earth. False prophets usually do not want the members of their congregation to surpass their success levels. They do not want their members to be spiritually stronger than them because they want their members to keep depending on them and worshiping them. Later on, when Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s power, Elijah was not hesitant to let him have it.

If you go to the parking lot of some of these false prophets you will realize the Main pastor's vehicles are classier, more stylish, and more expensive than the vehicles of other church members. Normally, in such churches, the main pastors live in better residences than the church members and generally live a more flamboyant life than the rest of the church members. In such congregations, you will see the main pastor arriving late in church with a lot of pomp and display. In most cases, they are quite untouchable, being surrounded by bodyguards and you will still call them mother and father.

Pastor Anthony Mwangi, commonly known as Pastor T, said that there is no biological father (or mother) who has his biological sons and daughters blocked from approaching him by body guards. Some of our pastors have lied to us that they are our mothers and fathers but will make it so hard for us to approach them or get near them.

God, the Owner of everything (except sin) has given us fulltime access to Him. You can access God, the most important being in the universe at any time and tell Him even the requests that you think are most petty. We waste a lot of time trying to access men who are inaccessible (politicians, celebrities, rich people, false prophets) because we think they have what we need instead of using that time to access God, who has what we truly need and who wants to give us more than we need.

Satan cleverly flashes material possessions in front of your eyes so that you can chase them. When you chase them, he makes it very difficult for you to get them. As a result, you end up spending so much time chasing them, thus leaving very little time for God and your family. This ends up weakening your relationship with God and with your family. You may get all that money but you end up spending it by taking your son or daughter to rehabilitation who is addicted to drugs. False prophets and abusive partners have mastered this strategy, making us to keep on begging them despite what they may put us through.

Therefore, that rat race seems like a never-ending race. Like Elijah, a true prophet points people to God while a false prophet points people to men and (i.e., himself). False prophets point people to worship other gods. Those other gods may not necessarily be graven images, they may be the worshiping of a spiritual gift or an ancient tool that was used in the Bible. For example, some make believers think that God cannot answer their prayers if they don't pray in tongues and some make believers think that they need a special cloth, jewel or any other tool that was probably used in the Old Testament by the Jews for God to answer them.

Hosea 4:6 (AMP) - "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [of My law, where I reveal My will]. Because you [the priestly nation] have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children." The most important knowledge is the Word of God, which is the Bible. Therefore, when we read Hosea 4:6 with this understanding, it means that people suffer because of lack of reading the Bible. As the gospel kindergarten song says, “Read your Bible, pray every day if you want to grow.”

Worshiping the True God

1 Kings 18:36-38 (KJV) - "[36] And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy Word. [37] Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again. [38] Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

During King Ahab's reign in Israel, the people abandoned worshiping the true God, Yahweh, and turned to the pagan deity, Baal. In response, the prophet Elijah issued a challenge to the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel to determine the real God.

Elijah gathered both the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. He proposed a test: each side would prepare sacrifices, but not ignite them. Instead, they would call upon their respective gods to send fire to consume the offerings. The prophets of Baal went first, invoking Baal from morning till noon, performing frantic rituals, yet receiving no response.

Baal’s prophets spent hours in prayer while Elijah’s prayer took a few seconds. Finally, Elijah’s prayer was answered but their prayers went unanswered. Both sides had faith but in different gods. Elijah had faith in the living God while the prophets of Baal had faith in Baal.

Matthew 15:9 (AMPC) - "In vain (fruitlessly and without profit) do they worship Me, ordering and teaching [to be obeyed] as doctrines the commandments and precepts of men." It does not

matter how loud one shouts, how many rituals they perform, or how many hours they spend in prayer and worship, faith in other gods besides the living God yields no good results.

Sometimes Satan can use his deceptive means and show you that he has answered your prayers because he has power to perform signs and wonders. However, we should understand that he exercises his power through God’s permission. Therefore, when God stops him from doing something, he can do nothing about it. That is why some of those who have gone to the most powerful witches have had those witches fulfill some of their requests but not all.

Balaam, a pagan prophet, could not fulfill Balak's (the King of Moab) request to curse the Israelites because he was unable to curse what God had blessed. Balaam declared, "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?" (Numbers 23:8, NIV). Despite multiple attempts and lavish offers, Balaam was compelled to speak only what God directed, reaffirming Israel’s blessed status (Numbers 22:12; 23:20).

Baal was an idol who could not see, touch, smell, taste or hear. The people spent many days prior to the event at Mount Carmel praying to a lifeless god. At the event they spent hours praying to Baal but he still did nothing. People waste time worshiping other gods instead of worshiping the living God. Some do this because they want a god whom they can physically access. Others knowingly worship the wrong god but they cannot stop it because they are deep into culture and tradition. People have various reasons for worshiping other gods. Whatever the reasons may be, all they are doing is in vain.

We have a God who is willing to listen to us at whatever time of the day for free but we neglect worshiping Him. Why would we want to spend our efforts in vain while we have an opportunity to live effortlessly through trusting in the Most High God? Some Christians involve rituals in their worship that are used to worship other gods. Most of them do that unknowingly. Some are converted but they still harbor practices that deny their allegiance to God, for example, failure to keep the seventh day Sabbath.

The Best Intention

1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV) - "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

When Elijah prayed to God, his request was closely accompanied with the best intentions. Sometimes we make good requests in our prayers but with the worst intentions. For example, God desires to boost us in our spiritual gifts and He is also willing to add more spiritual gifts to us but we request them with evil intentions.

For instance, one may ask God to give him or her the gift of healing or the gift of working out miracles so that they can use it to show off or to make money from vulnerable people. Some may ask for the gift of prophecy so that they can appear to be powerful before people's eyes. Success in life is good and God wants us to be successful but many people will ask for success so that they can be ahead of everyone else causing everyone to worship them.

What intention did Elijah have when he prayed? His intention was to glorify God. That is the best intention we can ever have when doing anything because God has called us to do everything to His glory. A Christian life should with no ounce of doubt portray the glory of God. How we appear from the outside and how we conduct our activities should leave no confusion or question in the minds of people that we are indeed children of God.

Elijah worshiped according to God's Word. Something done to the glory of God is something that should be in line with His Word. We should know what God's Word says so that we can be able to do even the smallest task to the glory of God. When we do not spend time studying the Bible we may fail to be fully aware of what it says. This may lead us to make wrong decisions and will end in God's name not being glorified. Is your worship according to God's Word? When God says the Sabbath is Saturday (the seventh day) and you fail to keep it and instead keep Monday or any other day, are you obeying God's Word? When God tells us to go to Him through Jesus and we use other media, are we obeying God's Word?

Elijah's intention was for the people to know that God is the ruler of everyone. Sometimes God gives us things but pride blinds us and we want people to view us as powerful and intelligent. It often happens that when someone gives us a compliment the last thing in our minds is the glory of God. Some may say, "To God be the glory" but do they really mean it from their hearts? Moment

by moment we are to surrender to God to subdue the pride and selfishness that is in our hearts and in humility seek to uplift God.

John 12:32 (AMP) - "And I, if and when I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all people to Myself [Gentiles, as well as Jews]."

When your sole intention is to uplift Jesus, your ministry in this world will be great. Men and women will be drawn to Him in great numbers. God the master rewarder will see your divine motive and will uplift you too. Elijah's motive was to uplift Jesus, for people to know that He exists and He is the one in charge of everything.

God answered Elijah's prayer immediately. This caused the people to acknowledge that truly the one and only God is indeed God (1 Kings 18:39). After reading this, before you pray, ask yourself, are the prayer requests you are making to God meant to uplift God or are they meant to uplift you? If they are not, find out how you can attach them with a godly motive and ask God to help you have that motive ingrained in your heart.

Rain Returns to Israel

1 Kings 18:41-46 (KJV) – “[41] And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. [42] So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, [43] And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. [44] And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say

unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. [45] And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. [46] And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

"The promise of abundance of rain had been given on condition of obedience. "It shall come to pass," the Lord had declared, "if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full." - Prophets and Kings, Page 135.4, Ellen G. White.

After Elijah slew the prophets of Baal at the Kishon Brook, and lifted the name of the Most High God, God caused rain to fall on the land. The land was troubled by drought as the result of God's wrath which was caused by the people turning away from God to worship Baal. Some might think that God is cruel, bringing punishment to those who refuse to worship Him. God's love is greatly portrayed when He punishes as it is shown when He rewards.

First, we ought to understand that God does not delight in punishing. Instead, He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). Usually, God punishes someone after He has given them numerous chances to repent and they fail to. In most instances, He gives someone a small punishment. He goes on to increase the severity of the subsequent punishments when a person chooses to be hard hearted.

When we worship other gods, we are untying ourselves from God, the source of life. That is the same thing that happens when we commit other sins. God sees this and because He does not want us to die, He tries His best to bring us to the way of truth, the way of life. To make the message loud and clear, sometimes, He does that through punishment. When God's wrath is full and He kills someone, He does that out of love too. One reason He does that is because He does not want the hard-hearted person to live long and suffer the numerous consequences of their sins.

Proverbs 3:12 (AMP) - "For whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights."

God punishes those He loves and He does that for their own good. God was pleased with Prophet Elijah, how he had honored and glorified Him and brought rains upon the land. God rewarded Elijah's faith by putting an end to the drought and pouring rain.

The faith of one person can bless an entire church. It can bless an entire city, nation, or continent. The faith of one man can bless the whole world. Therefore, when praying for a nation or the whole world, we should not view our prayers as too insignificant to alter things. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man can go a long way (James 5:16).

James 5:17-18 (AMP) – "[17] Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [with the same physical, mental, and spiritual limitations and shortcomings], and he prayed intensely for it not to rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. [18] Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its crops [as usual]."

1 Kings 18:46 describes a remarkable event where Elijah, empowered by God's Spirit, performs a feat of extraordinary speed and strength. Jezreel was a city where Ahab was headed in his chariot. Elijah, having been empowered by God, ran faster than Ahab's chariot, arriving at Jezreel before him. This act demonstrated not only Elijah's physical stamina but also God's supernatural intervention.

The verse highlights that Elijah's speed and endurance were the result of divine intervention. By running ahead of Ahab, Elijah's actions were a powerful testament to God's support and the confirmation of Elijah's prophetic authority. It also serves as a dramatic illustration of the contrast between the power of God and the ordinary capabilities of human effort, showing that with divine empowerment, extraordinary feats are possible.

Horeb: The Mountain of God

"Horeb" and "Sinai" are both significant in Hebrew history and have deep meaning in the biblical context. Horeb and Sinai refer to the same mountain.

Below are their meanings:

Horeb

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In Hebrew, "Horeb" is spelled חֹרֵב. The name "Horeb" is often used interchangeably with "Mount Sinai" in the Bible. It is believed to mean "desolation" or "wasteland" in Hebrew, reflecting the rugged and barren landscape of the region. It is the mountain where Moses encountered the burning bush and received the Ten Commandments from God (Exodus 3-4; Exodus 19-20). Horeb symbolizes the place of encounter with the divine, where God reveals Himself to humanity.

Sinai

In Hebrew, "Sinai" is spelled סִינַי. The name "Sinai" is associated with the mountain where Moses received the Law from God, commonly known as Mount Sinai. Its meaning is not entirely clear, but it may derive from the ancient Semitic root "sny," meaning "to shine" or "to be radiant," possibly alluding to the glory of God manifested on the mountain. Mount Sinai is considered the holiest mountain in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, being the place where God entered into a covenant with the Israelites and gave them the Torah (Exodus 19-20). The name "Sinai" also appears in other biblical contexts, sometimes referring to the larger region surrounding the mountain.

In 1 Kings 19, we embark on the remarkable journey of the prophet Elijah as he ventures into the wilderness and encounters God at Mount Horeb. After his triumphant showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah finds himself in a perilous situation. Threatened by Queen Jezebel, the prophet flees for his life. Amidst the desolation of the wilderness, Elijah, consumed by despair, pleads for death. Yet, in his darkest hour, God intervenes, sending an angel to provide sustenance, fortifying Elijah for the arduous trek to Mount Horeb.

Upon reaching Mount Horeb, Elijah is met with a breathtaking display of God's presence through awe-inspiring natural phenomena—mighty winds, quaking earth, and raging fire. Yet, amidst these grand spectacles, God's voice comes not in the tempest but in a gentle whisper, intimately reassuring Elijah of his unwavering presence and divine purpose. In this tender exchange, God commissions Elijah with a sacred task: to anoint new leaders. Among them, Elijah is to anoint Hazael as king over Aram and designate Elisha as his own successor.

This profound encounter underscores the theme of God's compassionate care for His servants, offering guidance and strength even in the depths of vulnerability. Through Elijah's journey, we

witness the enduring truth of God's intimate involvement in the lives of those who serve Him, providing direction and solace amidst life's trials and tribulations.

Elijah Meets Elisha

1 Kings 19:19-21 (AMP) - "[19] So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs *of oxen* before him, and he with the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his mantle (coat) on him. [20] He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said,

“Please let me kiss my father and mother [goodbye], then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go on back; for what have I done to [stop] you?” [21] So Elisha left him and went back. Then he took a pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their meat with the implements of the oxen [as fuel], and gave *the meat* to the people, and they ate. Then he stood and followed Elijah, and served him.”

God commanded Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:16). God has a replacement for everybody, that is why His work cannot stop. This should bring us to a point of humility, particularly those who think that they are irreplaceable. No matter how talented and skilled you are, God has a replacement for you. No matter how good and righteous you are, God has a replacement for you. Even when Jesus went to heaven, He left people with another comforter, the Holy Spirit. If Jesus, the son of God, was replaced after He left this earth, there is no one who cannot be replaced.

Elijah obediently carried out God's command to anoint Elisha as his successor. When he cast his mantle upon Elisha, symbolizing the passing of his prophetic authority, Elisha immediately left his work and followed Elijah. This act of obedience reflects Elijah's faith in God's plan and his willingness to fulfill his role as a prophet.

Elisha's response further highlights Elijah's faith. Despite having familial obligations, Elisha expresses his desire to follow Elijah but asks for permission to bid farewell to his family. Elijah's response, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" Suggests that he recognizes the significance of Elisha's decision and leaves the choice to him. Elisha's subsequent actions—sacrificing his oxen, symbolizing his livelihood, and feeding the people—illustrate his commitment to following Elijah and his readiness to leave his former life behind.

Destiny Helpers and Shapers

God has ordained people at every level of a person’s life to assist them to reach the next level. These people are usually aligned with your purpose. That is why it is important to follow God’s directions as He will lead you towards them, who in turn will act as a ladder to smoothen your way up. Such people do not necessarily have to be people who are better than you.

God can ordain anybody to help you. It can be someone who is younger than you, someone who is less knowledgeable and educated than you, or even someone who is poorer than you. Sometimes and often, such people come in disguise whereby it would not be so obvious that they are the ones ordained to help you. They may not look the part. They may not be according to your expectations. They may not come to you in the most comfortable way. It can be someone who shows interest in you and the things you are doing but you are not showing interest in return.

Many people spend a lot of time and sometimes resources trying to connect with the rich and prominent in society. You will find people with a salary that can barely cater for their needs, taking a loan to pay for golf clubs or golf classes so that they may be able to connect and network with the 'crème de la crème' of society. Some will break the Sabbath to attend car owner association events so that they may get 'big' connections.

Some people live beyond their means to buy vehicles, pay rent, or buy houses they can barely afford so that they may get such connections. Various people practice what is called partial respect. They only show respect to those whom they aspire to become and despise those who are "lower than them." People do that because they think that those who seem higher and better than them are the ones whom God has ordained to help them.

If more people would believe in God and diligently seek Him the way they seek human beings (since He is the richest and most prominent even though many do not believe so) people would be extremely blessed. We are willing to compromise our values to get the favor of these people. We are willing to break the Holy Sabbath day when such people give us an appointment. Many ladies compromise their morals in exchange of getting a rich man.

Psalm 121:1 (KJV) - "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

The Psalmist did not say, "I look around to see who will help me." He said that he points his eyes up because he knows that his help comes from God. Your help comes from God. God will direct the people to you who you need most when you need them most.

Many have lost lucrative opportunities by being unkind or neglecting people they think are lower than them. Then they resolve to complain about how God has not answered their prayers. If we introspect our lives, we would see that God answered our prayers many times but we were not diligent in listening, we were not diligent in obeying. In this regard, we need to always live by

faith, abiding by the commandments of God, for if we do so, we will not miss the great treasures that God has in store for us.

It is not a bad thing to approach or look for someone, whether rich or poor, prominent or less prominent. We can approach and search for the people who we admire in society but we should not compromise on our values to get their attention. People who compromise on their values and morals to get the attention of certain people rarely go beyond the level of those people.

For example, if you are willing to compromise your values to get the attention of someone who is worth a million dollars, you will rarely go beyond the wealth level of that person. The beauty in focusing on God is that God is greater, richer, and more prominent than all the people in the world combined, including the richest, most prominent and most popular, in the past, present and future. Therefore, focusing on God can set you on a higher level than all of them. Once you get the attention and approval of God, the greatest but most humble being in the universe, you need the attention and approval of no other person.

The disciples of Jesus had less Biblical knowledge, understanding and wisdom than Jesus but Jesus approached them and bid them to follow Him. In their weakness, they were made strong. In their incapacity they did a great and noble work in spreading the good news. Elisha was lower than Elijah but Elijah approached him to work together with him in his ministry.

Surprisingly, Elisha did not question Elijah. He agreed immediately. Often, relationships (friendships, business, marital) that are ordained by God, flow smoothly like that, especially if they are conducted in accordance with His will. If you find yourself begging someone to be with you, trying so hard to go beyond your means to impress someone, chances are high that your relationship is not ordained by God.

God has set people who are more than willing to aid you on your life's path. We sometimes fail to access them because we spend so much time trying to get the attention of people who do not want to relate with us. People are stuck in abusive relationships because of a scarcity mindset. Sometimes these abusive relationships end up in marriage. Many think that the person they are with is the best they can get. We often get our value through the lens of these people because we are always with them. Thus, blocking ourselves from seeing the good that the rest of the world has to offer us.

Musician Orville Richard Burrell alias Shaggy said, “If they don’t celebrate you, they are not for you.” In a media interview, he was advising people to always hang around people who celebrate them. He said this when talking about fellow musician Gordon Matthew Thomas Sumner alias Sting. Together they did an album titled “44/876” which won a Grammy Award in the Best Reggae Album category.

Shaggy said that when He worked with Sting, Sting was amazed by how creative and clever he was. He said, Sting kept on applauding him and being amazed of how he worked. He said that Sting kept calling him a genius. He said before he met Sting, he used to hang around with people who would never celebrate him despite earning almost all their money from him. Some of these people would even discourage him. He said he could not believe how such an accomplished international artiste like Sting, who has won seventeen Grammy awards among other accomplishments like being awarded by Queen Elizabeth would be amazed by him.

Normally, when we hang around people who are below us, especially in reasoning capacity, we can go through a lot of pain and can fail to accomplish our goals. When you are aiming high but the person next to you is comfortable with aiming for average goals, that person will do their best to convince you that your goals are unachievable. They will tell you to be realistic with your aspirations. They will give you all the reasons why you cannot do it rather than why you can do it.

Unfortunately, some of these people are in our midst and in positions of influence and responsibility. We have such teachers in our schools and in our churches. We have leaders in our society who are like that. Some of them believe that it is possible to be great but since they do not want you to be greater than them, they do their best to kill your ambitions through discouragement and blocking of opportunities.

If you hang around somebody who has more accomplishments than you or who has a mindset that is at the same level or higher than yours and has a genuine heart, that person will show you how impossible it is not to be able to do it. The world has a few good people who can give you that drive. However, we have a better choice that is easily available. God, is that best choice. When you spend time with God, He will show you how easy it is to be more than what you want to be. God will direct you to people on earth who are more than willing to give you more help than you require, like He directed Elijah to Elisha.

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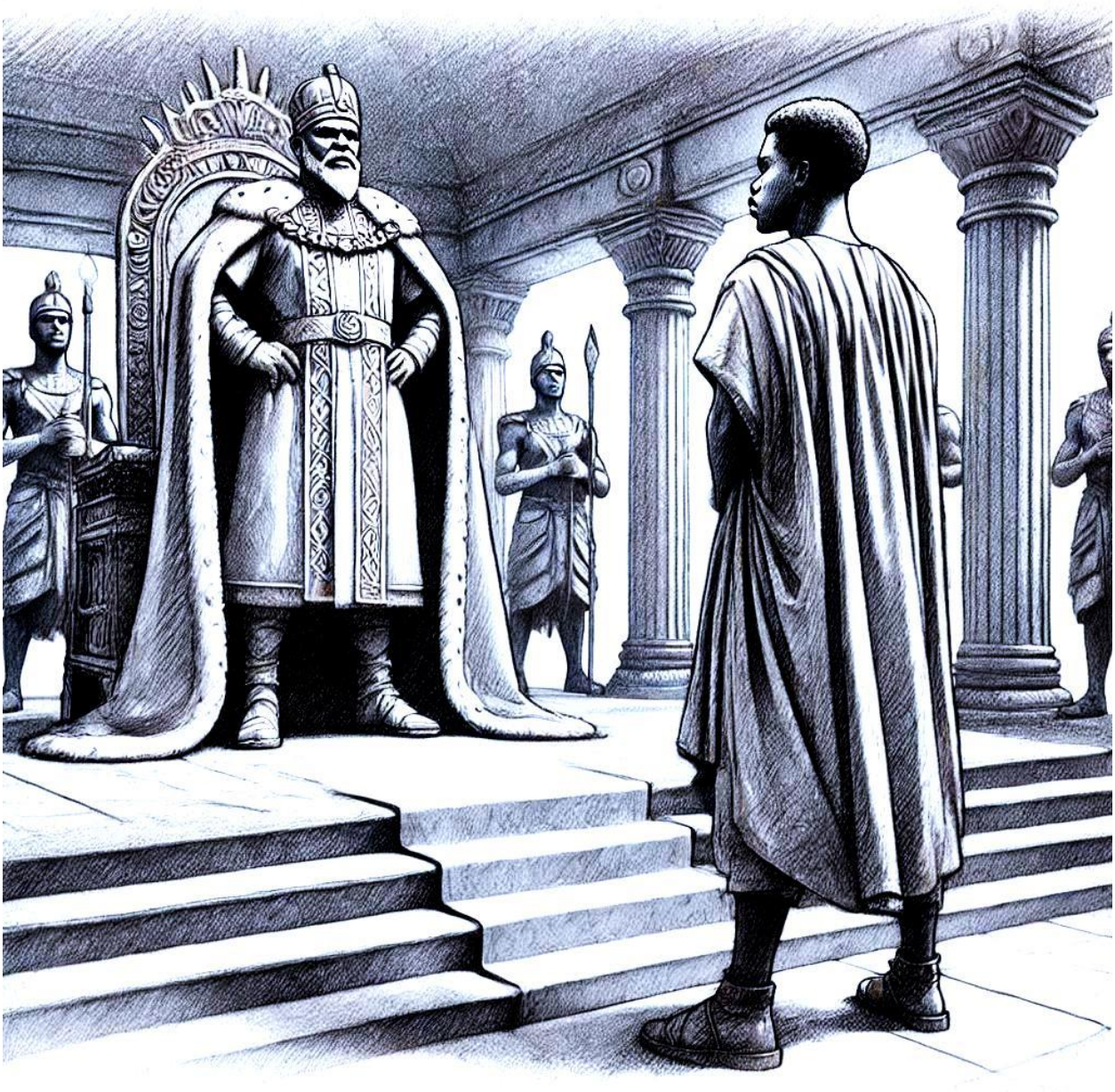
God Sends Elijah to Ahab Concerning Naboth



1 Kings 21:17-19 (KJV) - "[17] And the Word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, [18] Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. [19] And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying,

Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Matthew 7:12 (AMP) – "So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you, for this is [the essence of] the Law and the [writings of the] Prophets."

God commands us to do unto others what we would love them to do unto us. If we would follow this rule, we would not do most of the evil things we do to people. Before doing something to someone, ask yourself, “Would I want this to be done to me?” If the answer is yes, then proceed and do it. If the answer is no, then do not do it. Ahab had done injustice to Naboth. At first, he had requested Naboth to sell to him his vineyard but Naboth refused citing that he cannot sell his land because he got it as an inheritance. Through the wicked advice of his wife Jezebel, Ahab agreed to have Naboth killed.

Ahab's wife, Queen Jezebel, plotted to acquire the vineyard for Ahab by arranging for false witnesses to accuse Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king. As a result, Naboth was unjustly convicted and stoned to death. Ahab then took possession of the vineyard. Though Ahab did not directly carry out the act of killing Naboth, his actions and failure to intervene make him culpable for Naboth's death.

God did not send Elijah to Jezebel; he sent him to King Ahab. Leadership in any jurisdiction is a very critical role. As a leader, you should take responsibility for the actions done by your subordinates. In the home, the father is the leader and he needs to take responsibility of the spiritual nourishment and growth in other areas of that household. This applies to church, office, school, organization, city, state, country among other places.

Genesis 18:19 (KJV) - "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

God knew that Abraham was a good leader to his family. And what will make him a good leader to them? By leading them to keep the way of the Lord. Strong and good leadership is not about how physically strong one is. It is not about how strict, dictating and feared one is. It is about obeying God’s commandments.

Obeying God’s commandments strengthens a person spiritually, physically, socially, mentally, and emotionally. A leader who honors God and keeps His commandments is as solid as a rock, he shall never be moved (Psalm 15:5). A leader who obeys God’s commandments fully will easily influence those under him to do the same without having to tell them to do it. When he tells his subordinates to do something, they will be strongly influenced to obey. This is because the leader’s words will be accompanied by an unseen force and will have a stronger authority as the words will carry strong conviction. Some parents get frustrated by their disobedient children because they do not fully believe in the instructions that they are giving them.

For example, a parent may get frustrated that the child is not going to church while he himself does not go to church or even if he goes, he goes there as a social experiment or to tick off the to do list. Words speak but actions speak louder than words. With God’s help, leaders ought to ensure that everything goes according to God’s will. They cannot control people’s actions, they can only influence. Therefore, they need to constantly pray for those under them as they seek God’s wisdom on how to lead them.

Matthew 11:28 (NLT) - "Then Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'"

One of the burdens that Christ offers to help us with is the burden of leadership. Leading will be very challenging when we depend on our own efforts. We will keep getting frustrated. However, when we trust in God to help us and guide us with leading we will surely attain the desired goal.

As a king, Naboth should have stood firm and done his best to stop Naboth from being killed. If he had done his best and failed, God would not have held him accountable because he would have tried. A question to Christians: Are you doing your best to stop evil from prevailing in society? We do not know how many people we are denying our useful service when we fail to do our best.

When the Word of the Lord comes to Elijah instructing him to confront King Ahab regarding his sin, Elijah does not hesitate. Despite the potential danger involved in confronting the king, Elijah faithfully obeys God's directive to go down to meet Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth.

Elijah's faith is evident in his willingness to boldly proclaim God's judgment upon King Ahab for his wicked actions. Elijah fearlessly delivers the message from the Lord, accusing Ahab of murder

and usurping Naboth's vineyard. He declares that God will bring retribution upon Ahab, stating that the very place where dogs licked Naboth's blood, they would also lick Ahab's blood.

This was the second time Elijah went to King Ahab with a hard message. Normally, when God calls some of us to obey Him under tough circumstances, we may obey Him for the first time. After we witness hardships, we are sometimes reluctant to obey Him again. This is because we want to live comfortably, avoiding the potential hardships that we had previously witnessed. We should be willing to sacrifice for the cause of God whenever we are needed to. Our faith should be stronger than the obstacles.

Through his actions, Elijah displayed unwavering faith in God's authority and justice. He trusts in God's guidance and boldly speaks truth, even in the face of potential danger. Elijah's obedience and boldness serve as a powerful example of faithfulness to God's commands, regardless of the circumstances.

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Ahab Humbles Himself and Repents

1 Kings 21:27-29 (KJV) - "[27] And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. [28] And the Word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, [29] Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Elijah might have thought that King Ahab would kill him or do him harm. To his surprise, Ahab repented. Not only did he repent but he humbled himself. As a king he put on sackcloth and God saw the genuine repentance from his heart and turned away his wrath from him.

The future is with God, our work is to move by faith. Therefore, we should not worry of the potential danger that we may face when we are called to do God's work. Sometimes we may see someone as hard hearted and fail to minister to them not knowing that God has the ability to soften hearts.

Some of us fear evangelizing Christ's message to people of certain cultures and religions. Our job is to transmit the message that God has given us while it is God's work to convert them. We are like telephones or satellites or any other communication device. The message is from God, not us. Therefore, we should neither fear nor worry. Instead, we should have faith in God.

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Elijah Preached against Other gods

2 Kings 1:1-2 (KJV) - "[1] Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. [2] And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease."

King Ahaziah was the son of King Ahab who ruled Israel after his father Ahab had died. At that time, Israel and Judah were already divided as they had been divided during the reign of King

Rehoboam, Solomon’s son. Thus, leading to the formation of the northern kingdom of Israel, with Samaria as its capital, and the southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital. That is why King Ahaziah is called the King of Samaria in this context.

Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of King Ahab, during the reign of Ahaziah. When King Ahaziah fell sick, he sent messengers to go and inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether he shall recover from the disease from which he was ailing.

2 Kings 1:3-4 (KJV) - "[3] But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? [4] Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed."

In ancient times, the Philistine territory occupied the southwestern region of the Levant, stretching along the eastern Mediterranean coast. This area corresponds roughly to present-day southern Israel and the Gaza Strip, as well as parts of southwestern Israel.

Although the ancient Philistine territory shared borders with the region inhabited by the ancient Israelites, particularly along the coastal plains, they were distinct entities with their own cultures, languages, and political structures. The extent of interaction and proximity between ancient Philistine territory and ancient Israel varied across different historical periods and geopolitical contexts.

Today, the Gaza Strip, once part of the ancient Philistine territory, lies adjacent to southern Israel, maintaining a geographical closeness similar to ancient times. However, the modern boundaries and political landscapes in the region have undergone significant changes since antiquity. Nevertheless, Israel and Philistine share a border to this date.

Baal-Zebub, also spelled as Baalzebub or Beelzebub, was a deity worshiped in the ancient Philistine city of Ekron. The name "Baal-Zebub" translates to "Lord of the Flies" or "Lord of the Dung" in Hebrew. He was often associated with the power to ward off pests and diseases, particularly flies, hence the name.

In the biblical tradition, particularly in the Old Testament, Baal-Zebub is portrayed as a false god, and his worship is condemned as idolatry. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 1:2-3, where King Ahaziah of Israel sends messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub regarding his illness, instead of seeking guidance from the God of Israel. This action incurs the wrath of the prophet Elijah, who rebukes the king for turning to a pagan deity for help and predicts his impending death.

Having established that the Philistines shared a border with the Israelites, it is safe to conclude that they were neighbors. The angel of God told Elijah to ask the messengers of Ahaziah if they could not get God in Israel for them to go to Baalzebub the god of Ekron. That was a rhetorical question. Why were they going to worship their neighbor's gods while they had their own God who is more powerful, whom they were familiar with and who is the only true God.

It is like eating poison from your neighbor's house while you have food in your house or sleeping on the floor in your neighbor's house while you have a bed in your house. God has given us simple solutions that are near, but we go out to look for more complicated ones because we believe that life must be difficult.

God placed the tree of life next to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but still man chose to eat from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil and failed to eat from the tree of life. We often make the wrong choice while we have been given the option to choose the right choice. The wrong choice will often cause us to struggle and bring misery into our lives, but we will still choose it.

For example, most of us would choose to sleep and idle rather than do something productive. This choice will result in misery in the future. If we had chosen to do valuable work, we may suffer in the beginning for a while when doing it, but it will bring sweet fruits into our lives.

People were given a choice to choose between Jesus (the righteous son of God) and Barabbas (a thief who had been troubling them and stealing their goods) and they chose Barabbas. It is no surprise to find respectable church members, some holding high positions in church, seeking the help of sorcerers instead of going to God.

2 Kings 1:9-17 (KJV) - "[9] Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. [10] And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man

of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. [11] Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. [12] And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. [13] And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. [14] Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight. [15] And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king. [16] And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His Word? Therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. [17] So he died according to the Word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son."

King Ahaziah wanted to seize Elijah. Therefore, he sent a captain of fifty men with his fifty men. The captain told Elijah to come down. They thought that they would defeat him as he was one man against the fifty men. Physically when they looked at Elijah, they only saw one weak old man. They did not see the Almighty God and the entire host of heaven with him.

The world usually perceives people of God as weak because they are humble. They do not know that in their humility is hidden infinite power. Therefore, they attempt to harm them, thinking they will get away easily with the cruelty that they have conducted. Some will come with the best and most intelligent strategies to bring God’s people down not knowing that they are fighting against the master of strategies.

Exodus 14:14 (KJV) - "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

People of God are not weak even if they seem as the minority. This is because with God they are the majority. When you are backed up by God you are backed up by infinite power. You are also backed up by all the host of heaven. Therefore, you should not fear anything. When you are backed

up by Satan is when you should fear because Satan is not loyal. He may promise to be with you and leave you once you step in the battle field because he wants you to die. He has no interest in you living.

Not wanting to listen to the truth and obey it made Ahab's son, King Ahaziah stubborn. He kept on sending captains with their men even after the first one was devoured by fire. We should learn quickly from our mistakes. Life sometimes brings us harsh lessons to learn from but many of us tie a blind eye to them.

We commit a particular sin and face consequences and instead from learning from the consequences we repeat the same mistake again. Sometimes, it may be something we are struggling with and in such cases, we ought to constantly ask God for help. However, other times, it is not something we are struggling with, we just do it for the sake of doing it. Through our rebelliousness we deliberately drive ourselves into ditches with our eyes wide opened.

Faith is Action

The third servant sent by King Ahaziah was wise. When he saw what had happened to the previous two servants, he humbled himself and pleaded with Elisha to save his life. We do not all have to encounter bad experiences for us to learn. We can learn by evaluating the experiences of others. Choosing to learn from our own experiences can be dangerous. This is because that might be our last life experience. A good example is the first two captains and their men.

The third captain truly acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God compared to the previous two captains. How do we know this? When we look at the three captains, they all called Elijah, "Man of God." However, the first two did not do anything that showed they acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God. Matthew 7:21 (NKJV) - "[21] Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

A couple of people call Jesus Lord by word of mouth but they don't really believe that He is Lord. Their actions show that they do not fully believe in Him. The same applies in human relations. There are some people who will call you master out of formality. There are some who will call

you master because they want a favor from you but there are a few who will call you master because they truly believe that you are their master.

The third captain stands out from the rest of the crowd because of his actions. Words are wind, but actions are the sail. Talk may fill the air, but deeds pave the road. Promises are paper, actions are the ink. The echo of words fades, but the echo of actions reverberates. Speech is a whisper, action is thunder. The currency of deeds outweighs the value of words. Words can decorate the path, but actions clear the way. Talk paints the picture, but action brings it to life. Promises are the seeds; actions are the harvest. Words are the map; actions are the journey.

Talk is the prelude, but action is the crescendo. Words are like clouds, fleeting and ever-changing; actions are the solid ground beneath our feet. Talk may light the candle, but action ignites the flame. Speech may build the castle in the air, but action lays the foundation on the ground. Words are the seed, but action is the water that makes it grow. Words are the blueprint, actions the construction. Speech is the tip of the iceberg; action is what lies beneath the surface.

James 2:26 (KJV) - "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Matthew 23:3 (NKJV) - "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do."

In Matthew 23:3, Jesus is addressing the crowds and His disciples, cautioning them about the behavior of the religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees and scribes. He acknowledges that these leaders instruct people on what they should observe and do according to the law of Moses. However, Jesus warns His followers not to emulate the behavior of these leaders because they do not practice what they preach.

The Pharisees and scribes were known for their meticulous adherence to religious rituals and outward displays of piety. They often emphasized the importance of following the law and traditions of Judaism. However, Jesus criticizes them for their hypocrisy, pointing out that they do not live according to the principles they teach.

While they may speak eloquently about righteousness and obedience to God's commands, their actions do not align with their words. They may impose heavy burdens on others with their

teachings but fail to live up to those standards themselves. Their hypocrisy undermines the credibility of their teachings and sets a negative example for others to follow.

In essence, Jesus is urging His followers to discern between empty words and genuine deeds. He emphasizes the importance of living out one's faith authentically, not just professing it with words. This passage serves as a reminder to prioritize sincerity and integrity in both speech and action, rather than merely paying lip service to religious observance.

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Substance is something that is tangible. Faith without actions is dead.

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." – Confucius

Elijah did not subject the third captain and his men to die. Instead, he agreed to go with him to meet the king. When he stood before the king, he told him the truth. He told him that he would die because of the sin that he had done of seeking help from other gods. When we seek help from other gods, we are disconnecting from God who is the source of life. Therefore, we are doomed to death.

This was the second time King Ahaziah was told his mistake by Elijah. He should have repented but he did not. His father Ahab repented and God turned away His wrath from him. He chose to hold on to his sin. True to the Word of God, the king died. After he died, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah reigned in his place because he (Ahaziah) had no son to take up the throne from him. God brought the wickedness of the lineage of King Ahab to an end in that there were no heirs to the throne from Ahab.

Elijah Divides the Waters

2 Kings 2:6-8 (NKJV) – “[6] Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on. [7] And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. [8] Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.”

Elijah had told Elisha three times to stay where they were as he goes where the Lord had sent him. First, he had told him that God had sent him to Bethel but Elisha refused to leave him. Then he told Elisha that God had sent him to Jericho, still Elisha refused to leave him. Lastly, he told Elisha that God sent him to Jordan and Elisha stuck with him and chose to go with him wherever he went.

While they stood at the Jordan Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water and the water divided. Like Moses and the Israelites, the two of them crossed over on dry ground. People with no strong faith in God would probably get worried when they reach the River Jordan and they realize they cannot cross. Some would try looking for boats or making them.

Men and women of little faith will choose to struggle than to believe in God. God does not want us to struggle that is why He wants us to have faith in Him as He is willing to take away all burdens off our shoulders.

Elijah strokes the waters with the mantle he had in his hand. He did not go to look for special materials elsewhere. It would be a very tedious and expensive work when we attempt to divide waters using the current scientific knowledge that is available in this present technologically advanced age. If it is that difficult now, how was it back then?

Elijah did not have an advanced machine to divide the waters, he used what he had to divide the river. Everything a Godly man has is valuable, even if it does not look valuable. God will do the best work through you that will bless the world even when you do not have the best tools with you.

Children of God have abundance in scarcity while children of the world have scarcity in abundance. In other words, everything a child of God has is an asset. On the other hand, unbelievers may have plenty of resources but since they lack the wisdom on how to use them, they will keep complaining that what they have is too little. I had 10/20 Kenya shillings (an equivalent of 0.1/0.2 United States Dollars), I chose to use it to print memory verses and give them to random kids that I teach in church. Some were able to memorize them and they would probably grow up having the verses in their minds which will impact their lives immensely. Nothing that God has given you is too little.

Elijah and John the Baptist

Matthew 16:13-18 (KJV) – "[13] When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? [14] And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. [15] He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [16] And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. [17] And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

In the above text, Jesus asked His disciples what people say about Him. Whom do they say that He is? As we can see, some said that He is Elijah while some said that He is John Baptist. Those who said that He is John the Baptist might not have witnessed the full ministry of John the Baptist because if they had witnessed it they would realize that John the Baptist's main work was to prepare the way for Jesus. Those who said that Jesus is Elijah had read probably read the Prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 but had not understood it clearly.

Malachi 4:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: [6] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

When Malachi prophesized about the coming of Elijah the Prophet, he was essentially talking about John the Baptist who had stark similarities with the Prophet Elijah.

In the Adventist Affirm magazine article, Pastor Doug Batchelor, Speaker, and Director of Amazing Facts Ministries draws the following similarities between Elijah and John the Baptist:

They Were Bold and Fearless in Preaching, Even Before Kings

Elijah: Elijah told King Ahab, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:18).

John: "John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18). Both John the Baptist and Elijah were fearless in preaching a straight message before rulers and governors. Jesus said that this would happen again in the last days. "Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them" (Mark 13:9).

We must not seek to find our approval among men but rather with God. In order to effect a great revival, the Elijah message must be a bold proclamation of clear, uncompromising, and sometimes unpopular truth. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3, 4)

They Had a Simple Diet and Lifestyle

Elijah: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand" (1 Kings 17:11).

John: "He did eat locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6).

Both Elijah and John were known for their simplicity in diet and for wilderness living. These basic rigors kept their mental faculties clear and their bodies strong, so that they might be prepared for the special work God called them to do. Likewise, the church in the last days must be revived to the truth so that a strong connection links the body and the spirit. What we eat and drink, as well as our personal living habits, have a direct effect on our mental clarity and ability to discern truth. The power to resist temptation can be traced in part to a simple diet and moderate lifestyle.

Remember, sin came upon the human race as a result of eating the wrong thing. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! (Ecclesiastes 10:17) Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

They Dressed in Modest, Simple Clothing

Elijah: "He was an hairy man [with a garment of hair], and girt with a girdle [belt] of leather about his loins [waist]" 2 Kings 1:8.

John: "John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin [leather belt] about his loins [waist]" (Mark 1:6).

In the time when kings and priests loved to wear ornaments and long, flowing robes, Elijah and John's modesty and simplicity were a stinging rebuke. We live in an age when there has never been more arrogant attention given to flamboyance and fashion.

The main goal of modern clothing designers is to highlight a person's sexuality. Sadly, everything from body piercing to tattoos is being indulged even among professed Christians. Once again, the church desperately needs last-day Elijahs to witness for Christ by their example of humility and simplicity through modest clothing and appearance.

Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:24) In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [propriety] and sobriety [moderation]; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array [clothing]. (1 Timothy 2:9)

They Believed in Discipling Others

Elijah: "So he departed thence, and found Elisha . . . and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him" (1 Kings 19:19).

John: "And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things" (Luke 7:18).

The Scriptures record that Elijah not only discipled Elisha, but he also visited the schools of the prophets (also translated "the disciples of the prophets"), which were in the land of Israel (2 Kings, chapter 2). These training centers combined spiritual instruction with practical work skills. The young men trained at the schools of the prophets traveled throughout Israel, teaching others the ways of God. John, likewise, reproduced his faith by teaching the disciples who followed him.

Both John and Elijah spent most of their time training the common people rather than the priests and the Levites. Similarly, the last great movement of God will not only be led by clergy alone, but also by Spirit-filled lay persons. This is why the Elijah message must give attention to training, discipling, and mobilizing every member of God's church.

They Preached a Baptism of Repentance and Death to Self

Elijah: "Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan" (2 Kings 2:6).

John: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5, 6).

One identifying mark of the Elijah message is that it calls people to the Jordan River—a symbol of repentance and baptism. The children of Israel had to cross the Jordan River to enter the

Promised Land, just as we enter the waters of baptism to cross from our sinful lives to new lives in Jesus.

The great commission of Jesus to the church will have its finest hour in the future when once again these modern Elijahs will baptize converts to Christ in explosive, Pentecostal numbers. Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:14) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

They Both Manifested Humility

Elijah: "And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (1 Kings 18:42).

John: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11).

Before Jesus comes again, the people of God will have learned to reflect the meek and humble character of Jesus in an age of arrogance and pride. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

They Both Endured Religious Persecution

Elijah: "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them [who had been killed] by tomorrow about this time" (1 Kings 19:2).

John: "She went forth, and said unto her mother [Herodias], What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist" (Mark 6:24).

In the Old Testament, a pagan queen named Jezebel married Ahab, the king of Israel. Jezebel and her daughter, Athaliah, persecuted God's people and tried to entice Ahab to kill Elijah and the

other prophets. In the New Testament, Herodias, the pagan wife of king Herod, and her daughter Salome succeeded in enticing Herod to kill John the Baptist.

The persecution experienced by Elijah and John will soon be repeated. In the last days, Revelation tells us, the "Mother of harlots" and her daughters will persecute God's remnant people, the last-day Elijahs. The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:17) Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Revelation 17:5, 6)

They Both Ran Before the King

Elijah: "The hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (1 Kings 18:46).

John: "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight" (Luke 3:4).

When a monarch traveled in Bible times, servants often ran ahead to prepare the path for the approaching king. They cleared the road of rocks and obstacles, filled in potholes, cut down high spots, and straightened the crooked turns. In the same way, those preaching the Elijah message in the last days will help prepare people for the coming of our King Jesus. They will proclaim a message that makes the way of salvation clear, plain, and easy to understand. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. (Revelation 14:6)

They Were Both Supremely Interested in Glorifying God

Elijah: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (1 Kings 18:37).

John: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Those preaching the Elijah message will make glorifying God their top priority. They will be wholly consecrated to God's cause, just as were John and Elijah. They will be willing to make any sacrifice in order that others might be saved—in other words, to spend and be spent in the work of God. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

They Repaired the Altar of God

Elijah: "Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down" (1 Kings 18:30).

John: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1, 2).

The Elijah message will be a trumpet call to return to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Today, when so many tell us that the teachings of the Bible are old-fashioned and need to be revised to better fit our times, we desperately need to be reminded that God said, "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:12)

Their Messages Sparked Revival and Reformation

Elijah: "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel," "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him" (1 Kings 18:19, 21).

John: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4, 5). In the days of Elijah

and John the Baptist, God's people had been corrupted by the pagan influences around them and had compromised God's truth (1 Kings 19:14; Matthew 3:1, 2).

These two brave prophets delivered a message that sparked revival and reform among God's people. Today, once again, it seems that much of Christianity is lukewarm and worldly. If judgment is going to begin at God's house (Ezekiel 9:6; 1 Peter 4:17), then certainly the revival must start there too! Since God's plan is for His people to reach the entire world, He must first send the Elijah message to reach the church.

In the Old Testament, Elijah led the people to repent and return to God on Mount Carmel. Then he prayed, and God sent abundant rain to end the drought. Likewise, John the Baptist called upon the people of his day to repent and accept Jesus. Shortly thereafter, they received the former rain of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Modern Elijahs will also preach a message of repentance. Then, when the church humbles itself, the latter rain of God's Spirit will fall.

The Elijah Message Will Point People to Christ

Elijah: "Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God" (1 Kings 18:36).

John: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The burning desire of modern Elijahs will be to turn people to Jesus so that they might know Him and have everlasting life.

[Credits to: Adventist Affirm Magazine, Volume 22, Pastor Doug Batchelor: The Last Elijah Message]

Elijah Goes to Heaven

2 Kings 2:9-11 (KJV) – "[9] And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." [10] So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." [11] Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Elijah was pleased with Elisha's faith, how he chose to stick by his side wherever he went. Therefore, he asked Elisha to make a request of what he wanted. Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah was selfless for he did not hesitate to give Elisha his request. Faith in God goes hand in hand with selflessness.

A teacher's and a mentor's greatest aim should be for the student he is teaching to surpass his or her success. We often help people but we rarely want them to be ahead of us or leave behind a greater legacy in life than us. We have no problem if they do well in life, we just do not want them to do better than us.

Elijah was willing to give Elisha a double portion of his spirit. He wanted Elisha to do greater works than he did. Therefore, he told Elisha that if he sees him when he is taken away from him, he would be granted what he requested.

As they continued talking, a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire and separated the two of them. When serving God, Elijah probably didn't know that he would be taken away by a chariot of fire to heaven. However, as the days went on, he might have had a revelation of being taken away even though he might not have known the means that would take him away.

We can see a glimpse of that evidence when he told Elisha "If you see me when I am taken from you." This means that he somehow knew that he would be taken away. When we get closer to God, we can be able to predict some of the future events in our lives.

God rewarded Elijah's faith by taking him to heaven without seeing death. God will reward us too when we show faith in Him. God did not take Elijah to heaven while he was idling or sleeping. He took him while he was working. He took him while he was mentoring Elisha. Tremendous blessings are found when we work on our life's purpose. Marvelous blessings are encountered when we follow God's direction when conducting His work.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I come before you as a sinner. Forgive me all the sins that I have committed ever since I was born. I ask You Lord to fight all my battles for me because I am weak and I cannot fight

them by myself. Help me to treasure going out of my comfort zone and doing everything to your glory. I place all my worries upon You, please give me rest. Please help me to always be in the habit of encouraging others. Deal with all my negative thoughts, words, and actions. Show me the people to mentor and guide me as I mentor them. Please help me to speak the truth at all times without favor or partiality. Help me to keep You first above everyone else. Do away with all the other gods that I am treasuring in my life. Help me use all I have to the best of my ability to further your kingdom. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Activity

1. Are you in a comfort zone? Ask yourself daily what you can do to get out of that comfort zone. It will be helpful if you list the activities within your ability that glorify God that will make you get out of your comfort zone.
2. List the things that you are worried about and present them to God in a prayer, asking Him to take away those worries.
3. Optional: Identify newly baptized church members and prayerfully find out how you can help them in their walk with Christ.
4. Optional: Identify newly married people and find out how you can mentor them on marriage (This exercise is more suitable for old couples that are already married and are willing to mentor new couples, however, one may not be married but they may have the wisdom and the calling, therefore feel free to do it).
5. How can you use your abilities to evangelize? List ways that you can use your abilities to evangelize.
6. List down people that you feel need encouragement and pray for them. Afterward, find out how you can help each of them.
7. List down your family members and find out what you can do to encourage each of them.
8. Find ways that you can be more positive and bring more light to the world.
9. What problem are you facing? Prayerfully try to find out the root of it and ask God to help you deal with it from the root.
10. Ask yourself, are you worshiping the true God? Most people will answer, “I don’t know.” Exercise 11-13 will help you in knowing if you are worshipping the true God.

11. Set a schedule for personal Bible study. It should be daily (you can choose any time that is most convenient for you but I prefer you do it in the morning before you begin the day). Prayerfully ask God to help you stick to that schedule. Bible study helps you to know God more.
12. With your family, set a schedule for family Bible study. It should be daily (you can choose any time that is most convenient for you but I prefer you do it in the morning before you begin the day). Prayerfully ask God to help you stick to that schedule. Bible study helps you to know God more and it strengthens the union among believers.
13. With your friends, set a schedule for Bible study. It should be daily (you can choose any time that is most convenient for you but I prefer you do it in the morning before you begin the day). Prayerfully ask God to help you stick to that schedule. Bible study helps you to know God more and it strengthens the union among believers.
14. Analyze the good things that you do and ask yourself if you are doing them with the best intentions.
15. Identify people around you whom you can mentor. It may be in church, at school, at the workplace or anywhere else.
16. Do you always tell the truth? What truth (anything in accordance with the Bible) is burning in your heart that you want to tell a person/people but you are afraid to do it. Ask God to give you the wisdom to do it.
17. Is there a sin in your life that you have not repented? Humble yourself and repent.
18. What are some of the foreign and/or neighboring gods that you are worshiping? (They do not have to be physical idols; they can be anything you place above God).
19. What battles are you facing in your life that you would want God to intervene? List them down and ask God to fight for you.
20. Is your faith accompanied by actions? Do you practice what you preach? Ask God to help you through it.
21. Ask God to show you how you can use the little that you have to further His kingdom.
22. Find ways that you can help the people you are mentoring to be better than you.

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CHAPTER 66

THE FAITH OF PROPHET ELISHA

For when the grave held his body still,

Even in death Elisha's bones did God's will,

Be still in the Lord your God and do not steal,

Like the widow of oil, God will provide your next meal.

Elisha stretched upon Shunem's son, his prayers so deep,

And called on the omnipotent God who awakens sleep,

He always approached God with a heart so meek,

Every week God's power was great through him, uplifting the weak.

Elijah's whirlwind marked God's decree,

Elisha bid him awaiting a double plea,

This is a lesson for you and me,

Ask God for what's beyond you, what's beyond the furthest sea.

Like Elisha, add Jesus to the equation,

Faith minus Jesus cannot equal eternal salvation,

Faith minus Jesus equals eternal damnation,

Faith to the power of Jesus leads to eternal multiplication.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Introduction

Elisha, the prophet of Israel, emerges as a pivotal figure in the Bible, his life marked by profound miracles and an unwavering faith in God. Known for his steadfast dedication to his prophetic calling and his numerous miraculous deeds, Elisha's life serves as a powerful testament to the profound impact of faith. The passage in Hebrews 11:32-35 recounts the extraordinary acts of faith by biblical figures, highlighting their victories and endurance. Within this context, Elisha's faith shines brightly as an example of divine power working through flesh and blood.

Elisha, whose name means "God is salvation," was the son of Shaphat from Abel-Meholah (1 Kings 19:16). His calling to the prophetic ministry came through the great prophet Elijah. As Elijah's appointed successor, Elisha's journey began when Elijah cast his mantle upon him while he was plowing in the field (1 Kings 19:19-21). This act signified the transfer of prophetic authority and responsibility, and Elisha responded with immediate obedience, leaving his family and livelihood to follow Prophet Elijah.

Elisha's ministry officially commenced after Elijah's ascension to heaven in a whirlwind as he stood there and saw the whole scenario (2 Kings 2:11-12). Having received a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9-10), Elisha embarked on a prophetic career characterized by remarkable miracles and stupendous faith. His first recorded miracle was parting the waters of River Jordan, reminiscent of Elijah's own miracle, thereby confirming his succession and divine empowerment (2 Kings 2:13-14).

Throughout his ministry, Elisha performed numerous miracles that demonstrated God's power and love. He purified the waters of Jericho, making them safe to drink (2 Kings 2:19-22), and provided an unending supply of oil for a widow in dire need (2 Kings 4:1-7).

One of Elisha’s most notable miracles involved raising the Shunammite woman’s son from the dead, showcasing his deep compassion and God’s power over life and death (2 Kings 4:18-37). These acts not only underscored his prophetic authority but also reinforced the faith of the people in God's power and providence.

Elisha's faith was further shown in his interactions with Naaman, the Syrian commander plagued with leprosy. Despite Naaman's initial skepticism, Elisha instructed him to wash in the Jordan River seven times, resulting in his miraculous healing (2 Kings 5:1-14). This event not only demonstrated Elisha's unwavering faith in God's instructions but also highlighted the universality of God's mercy, extending even to those outside Israel.

Elisha's later years continued to be marked by significant prophetic acts. During a famine in Samaria, he prophesied the end of the siege by the Arameans, and his prophecy was fulfilled in a miraculous manner (2 Kings 7:1-20). His faith remained unshaken even on his deathbed, where he prophesied victories for Israel over its enemies (2 Kings 13:14-19).

Elisha's life came to an end, but his impact did not. Even after his death, a miracle occurred when a dead man, upon contact with Elisha's bones, was revived (2 Kings 13:20-21). This posthumous miracle underscores the enduring nature of Elisha's prophetic power and faith.

Elisha's faith journey, from his calling to his miraculous deeds, illustrates a life wholly dedicated to God's service. His unmovable trust in God, coupled with his compassion and miraculous works, stands as a testament to the power of faith. Through his life and ministry, Elisha demonstrated that faith in God can lead to extraordinary acts of divine intervention, providing hope and inspiration to believers throughout the ages.

Elisha’s Call and Immediate Obedience

1 Kings 19:19-21 (AMP) – “[19] So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. Elijah went

over to him and threw his mantle on him. [20] He left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go on back. What have I done to stop you?” [21] So Elisha left him and went back. Then he took a pair of oxen and sacrificed them, boiled their meat with the implements of the oxen as fuel, and gave the meat to the people, and they ate. Then he stood and followed Elijah, and served him.”

Elijah did not have to tell Elisha to follow him. Just by dropping his mantle, Elisha agreed to follow him even before he spoke. It is like Elisha had been waiting for that opportunity eagerly. Normally, when you really want something, you rush to grab it before it reaches you.

Luke 15:20 (AMP) - "So he got up and came to his [own] father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him fervently."

The prodigal son’s father ran to hug him when he was still a long way off from where he was. It is like jumping one hundred meters high to grab something that you really value that is falling from the sky before it falls. The way Elisha acted showed that he had closely interacted with God’s Word. How we behave goes hand in hand with the truth we possess and believe.

One might have read the Bible but believes it partially. Thus, his actions will show partiality. It would be difficult to tell if he is either hot or cold. The quality of life of a person accurately exemplifies the truth they are exposed to and their system of beliefs. Those who study God’s Word daily and fully believe it will act according to what it says with precision and assertiveness. Weak Christianity is born from the wombs of weak and minimal study.

When you study the Word of God and believe it, you will be able to know God’s will for your life. You will not have confusion and trouble in making decisions because you will know in personal application what God requires you to do and what He does not want you to do. Elisha interacted with God’s Word. Therefore, when He saw Elijah, he was fully convinced that indeed Elijah was a man of God. Therefore, when Elijah dropped his mantle, Elisha was quick to act.

The Word of God has a quickening power. Sometimes, we often blame God for being too slow while in essence we are the ones who are slow. You have been praying for something and in your mind, you are angry with God because you think that He has delayed. God has not delayed; He

might be actually waiting for you to do what He has told you to do so that you receive the blessing that He wants to give you.

The Essence of Work

“Leisure May Lead to Despondency—Despondent feelings are frequently the result of undue leisure. Idleness gives time to brood over imaginary sorrows. Many who have no real trials or hardships in the present are sure to borrow them from the future. If these persons would seek to

lighten the burdens of others, they would forget their own. Energetic labor that would call into action both the mental and physical powers would prove an inestimable blessing to mind and body." — The Signs of the Times, June 15, 1882, Ellen G. White.

Elisha was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen when Elijah saw him. It is an act of faith to work, whether one is doing manual labor or cognitive work. Faith in God is shown when one engages in moral work. Elijah met Elisha as he was working. He did not meet him while he was idling. Opportunities that you never knew existed will come to you when you are working. In your mind you might have pictured meeting certain goals within a certain time frame but an opportunity comes that enables you meet those goals in a shorter time frame.

Jesus called His disciples while they were working. Idleness provides a ground for Satan to breed every harmful seed that he can with your life. One reason the devil does not want you to work is because when you work you grow in knowledge and Satan does not want you to increase in knowledge. He wants you to stay in the darkness so that he can keep on tormenting you. When you work you become more creative and innovative and the enemy does not want that.

"Well-regulated labor is essential for the success of every youth. God could not have inflicted a greater curse upon men and women than to doom them to live a life of inaction. Idleness will destroy soul and body. The heart, the moral character, and physical energies are enfeebled. The intellect suffers, and the heart is open to temptation as an open avenue to sink into every vice. The indolent man tempts the devil to tempt him." — Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 604.5, Ellen G. White.

When you work and you put God at the center of all you are doing, you will be able to discover your purpose and calling. Once you know your purpose, God will give you clear directions as you move step by step. Elisha probably did not know that his calling was to be a prophet. However, he did not stay idle. He served others.

Probably the oxen he was plowing with belonged to his family, meaning, he was serving his family. The house chores that we often look down upon can lead to tremendous blessings. Jacob received his blessings as he was doing house chores. Many people, particularly the youth, go out there to look for jobs that pay them money while they never help with house chores. The jobs they are looking for out there are engulfed with a selfish motive, they want to work, get money, and buy

the things that they want to buy. Money is an amazing reward but it should not be our highest motivation.

The Bible says in Proverbs 23:4 (KJV) - "Labour not to be rich." True riches come as a reward for the value that you have added to someone and they should be a means to an end but not the end. The highest purpose for work should be to glorify God. God might have put you in a place where you are not getting money because He wants you to grasp that lesson. He wants you to know that the purpose for work goes beyond merely making money.

When we put money first above everything else, we might not produce quality work as we should. However, when we value service to others more than we value the money we are getting, we will produce high quality work and He who has the whole universe in his hands will not fail to give you your reward.

God might have allowed you to get afflicted by unemployment so that you can learn about service to others. He might be telling you, "If you are not serving the people around you, how can I be sure that you will serve others out there?" Therefore, in His love, God does not want you to harm people with your service that is not conducted wholeheartedly. God knows that the more people you hurt, the more you are going to hurt yourself and He does not want you to get hurt. Therefore, He keeps you waiting till you get it right.

As you drop your resumes and cover letters from office to office, ask yourself if you have done your part in serving the people around you. Normally, when two people are qualified for a certain position, God will choose the most selfless person among the two to occupy that position so that he can be of greater benefit. What work portrays the highest selflessness level? The work that displays the highest level of selflessness is work that you do without getting paid, for example: house chores, volunteer work, and church service, among others.

While serving people, Elisha had come out of himself that the first thing he told Elijah was going back to bid his parents goodbye. He was excited about the opportunity at hand but he thought of his parents first before he thought of himself. Parents are encouraged to involve the children with household duties. Once they do so, children will realize that the world does not revolve around them. They will love their parents and siblings more.

Some parents do not want their children to do house chores because they feel that letting their kids help out in the house is derogative. They want their children to live as princes and princesses with servants serving them. Some might advocate for such a lifestyle because they were subjected to suffering and harsh treatment when they were young.

Some parents might have been brought up by relatives and step parents who would mistreat them and give them a lot of work to do while their children enjoyed a ‘luxurious’ lifestyle of indolence. Therefore, when God blesses such people and makes them successful later in life, they think that the best way to bring up their kids is subjecting them to a life of indolence. We should not mistreat children but we should involve them in household duties in a loving way.

When Elijah heard that Elisha wanted to bid his family goodbye, he allowed him to do it. Elijah bid his family good bye in a respectful way. He accompanied his words with action by sacrificing the oxen and serving them with meat. Exodus 20:12 (AMP) - "Honor (respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged in the land the LORD your God gives you." The best way to honor people, including our parents and family at large, is through actions that are accompanied by genuine honor from the heart.

Elijah Leaves Elisha

2 Kings 2:1-11 (AMP) – "[1] Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. [2] And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. [3] Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]." [4] Elijah said to him,

“Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. [5] The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it].” [6] Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. [7] Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood [to watch] at a distance; and the two of them stood by the Jordan. [8] And Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the waters, and they were divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. [9] And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” [10] He said, “You have asked for a difficult thing. However, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” [11] As they continued along and talked, behold, a chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared suddenly and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.”

Here Elisha showed faith in God through:

Commitment and Loyalty

The name "Gilgal" is believed to mean "circle of stones" or "rolling." Gilgal is significant in the Bible as the first Israelite campsite after crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Joshua 4:19-20). The Israelites set up twelve stones in Gilgal which were taken from the Jordan as a memorial. Gilgal also served as a place of worship and the location where Saul was confirmed as king (1 Samuel 11:14-15).

The name "Bethel" means "house of God." Bethel is an important Biblical site where Jacob dreamt of a ladder reaching to heaven and received God's promise (Genesis 28:10-19). It became a worship center and one of the places where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for a time (Judges 20:26-28). Bethel also held significance during the time of the divided kingdom, as it became one of the locations for the worship of the golden calves set up by King Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-29).

The name "Jericho" is believed to mean "fragrant" or "moon city." Jericho is best known for the miraculous conquest by the Israelites led by Joshua, where the walls of the city fell after the Israelites marched around them for seven days (Joshua 6). It is one of the most ancient, inhabited cities in the world and was known for its palm trees and springs. Jericho was also the site where Elisha purified the water (2 Kings 2:19-22).

The name "Jordan" means "to descend" or "flowing down." The Jordan River is a major watercourse in the region and holds great biblical significance. It is the river that the Israelites crossed to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 3:14-17). The Jordan River is also where John the Baptist baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17), marking the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The river symbolizes purification and transformation in the biblical narrative.

The above four listed places have great significance in the history of the Israelites and of Christianity as well. Elisha had probably read or heard about them and the significant events that happened there; so, he did not want to be left behind when Elijah was going to those places.

The distance from Gilgal to Bethel is approximately twenty kilometers. The distance from Bethel to Jericho is roughly 30 kilometers and the distance from Jericho to the Jordan River is about 8 km. Making a total of around 58 kilometers for that entire journey.

A complete marathon is usually 42 kilometers but many people lack the patience and motivation to complete it even while walking. They find the marathon distance to be long and tedious. The few who choose to participate in it, take part in it because they understand its value. If people were assured that there is plenty of gold and diamonds 1,000 miles away from where they are and they have to walk to that place to get the great riches, they will tirelessly walk till they get there.

A person who spends one hour in the gym exercising understands the value of exercising even though it is not always pleasant. In those ancient days when Elisha and Elijah lived, there were no modern means of transport. People used to walk or use donkeys and horses. Horses and chariots were used mostly by kings but Elijah and Elisha were not kings. If they used a donkey, it probably took around seventeen hours to cover that distance since donkeys walk at an average speed of 3 to 4 km/h. If they walked it took them around twelve hours at a speed of 5 km/h.

People in these modern times get tired sitting in a bus or a train or an airplane for six hours. How tired would they be if they had to walk for twice that amount of time? Elijah probably felt sorry

for Elisha as he thought about the distance he had to cover and he did not want him to get tired covering that huge distance. Therefore, he told him to remain where he was and wait for him.

Elisha knew the distance between all those places and he knew that he would get tired traveling but he still insisted on following Elijah. Some people convert to Christianity because they expect it to be an easy journey. When such people encounter a few challenges on the way, they give up and backslide. A true Christian is one who is willing to follow Christ wherever He goes and is willing to encounter Christ in whatever he might encounter on that narrow path.

Faith is proven more in the darkness than it is in the light. Faith is proven more when one is subjected to wear a crown of thorns than when they are subjected to wear a crown of pearls. Faith is proven more in insecurity than it is in security. Faith is proven more in the wilderness than it is in the Promised Land. Faith is proven more when one meets a lion than it is when one meets a lamb. Faith is proven more in a desert than it is in a fertile land. In summary, faith is proven more when times are hard than when times are easy.

Elisha's faith had matured to a point that he had by a great deal come out of himself and was willing to travel extra miles for others. Most decent Christians are usually helpful to others when it is within their scope of comfort to do so. For example, if one has one thousand dollars, he would not mind giving away one dollar. God is the type who would give you the only dollar that He has. Pastor Randy Skeete says if God had one shirt and you are feeling cold, he would take off that one shirt and give you. He gave His only begotten son (John 3:16).

My friend Richard gave me a profound perspective on love. He told me before man sinned, He had perfect love, love for God (vertical direction love) and love for fellow men (horizontal direction love). He used both of his hands to point up and across respectively (signifying a vertical and horizontal direction). He went further to say that when man sinned, the love for God and the love for men made a U-turn and went to himself. He used his hands again to make that U-turn and pointed back to himself. He said that those vertical and horizontal arrows cannot be straightened by man. The power of God is needed to straighten them.

This teaching is profoundly Biblical as it undergirds Jeremiah 13:23 (KJV) - "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The Ethiopian and the leopard cannot change their own skin and their spots, respectively. A

fellow leopard cannot change the spots of another leopard, likewise to the Ethiopian. This illustration implies that we do not have the ability to change ourselves or to change others. We can influence others which can lead them to change but we cannot change them.

God is the only one who has the power to transform someone positively. God alone can make the most hard-hearted sinner righteous. The Spirit of God working through Elisha made him selfless so that he did not care about his body getting tired. He chose to stick by Elijah and accompany him wherever he went.

Elisha refused three times to leave his mentor Prophet Elijah. This action demonstrated unwavering commitment and loyalty. He insisted on staying with his mentor despite being encouraged to stay behind. Sometimes we are able to overcome a certain temptation for the first time but we are unwilling to overcome it the second time. Our loyalty needs to be shown with a high-level commitment. We should be more committed to living righteously than the enemy is committed to making us sin.

Matthew 5:6 (KJV) - "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? Jesus Christ promises that if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you shall surely be filled. When you are committed to be loyal to God, God will make it easy for you to obey Him. You will be able to do things that you never thought you were able to when you were in sin.

True faith involves steadfast loyalty and commitment to God's calling and to those He places in our lives as mentors and leaders.

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Determination

Elisha’s determination to follow Elijah, even when it might have been easier to stay behind, shows his perseverance and determination.

2 Kings 2:3 (AMP) – “Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, “Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it].””

2 Kings 2:5 (AMP) – “The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it].””

At Bethel and at Jericho, the sons of the prophets asked Elisha if he knew that Elijah would be taken away from him that particular day. Elisha answered that he knew and told them to be quiet about it. Elisha was in close contact with God and his word for him to know that Elijah would be taken away from him that day.

When you are in close contact with God’s Word you will be able to predict some future events in the lives of others and in your own life. Amos 3:7 (KJV) - "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." God does not like catching us by surprise especially on major events in our lives. He gives us a clue of what lies ahead of us. We are caught by surprise through our ignorance of God’s Word.

Many Jews in the time of Jesus were caught by surprise when Jesus came because they did not know what the Bible said concerning the coming of Jesus. Some people will be caught by surprise when Jesus comes back the second time because of their ignorance in the second coming message of Jesus.

Elisha not only knew that his master Elijah would be taken away from him he also knew that his master would be taken away from him that day. The closer you walk with God, the more accurate your predictions of future events will be. He might not have known the exact time but he knew the exact day. This knowledge made him act with determination. Knowledge fosters people to work with determination. Knowing that Christ will come back and the great rewards that await us have caused many Christians to be determined in the Christian Walk.

Some people get confused whether the business idea they have is God’s will or not. This confusion causes them to lack determination in pursuing it. If they knew it is God’s will, they would be more than determined and they will do their best in implementing it. How can one know if something they want to do is the will of God or not? The easiest and most sure way to do this is to be in close contact with God’s Word. Read the Bible and pray every day and you will grow in all areas of your life.

Reading and studying God's Word should happen daily. It would be great if you take a few minutes to study your Bible immediately when you wake up and before you go to sleep. If you are not used to individual Bible study, start small by dedicating at least five minutes each day in the morning, then graduate to five minutes in the evening and slowly you will grow in grace and start spending more time with it.

The Bible gives you direction in your life and the more you get in close contact with it, the clearer your path will be. God who created the entire universe in six days will show you how to get ahead in your life in a short period of time. The more time you spend with the Bible, the more fast-tracked your life will be.

People tend to falsely believe that things of God take too long. That is why the resolve to follow 'short cuts.' Unfortunately, they cause their own delays by following those shortcuts. Those short cuts tend to be longer than they had expected. For example, when someone chooses to steal with the ambition of getting quick money then he gets caught and is sentenced to serve ten years in prison. The short cut he took ends up resulting in a very long process.

If the same person would start a legitimate business or pursue his calling while involving God in every single step, he would end up attaining true success and financial freedom. If he diligently obeys God through the process, it would not be such a long time. The reason sometimes it takes it takes a long time for you to receive what you have been asking for is because you do not diligently listen to what God is telling you, thus you do not diligently obey what God is telling you.

You might be a teacher asking God for a pay rise at work and God tells you to write a book. Usually, such ideas come to you like a whisper then they start getting louder. If you choose to procrastinate on it for ten or forty years before you start, you are the one who has caused your own delay, not God.

If Elisha was not familiar with God's Word, he would not have known that his master would be taken away from him that day and he would not have acted the way he acted. He would have missed the blessing of Elijah giving him a double portion of his spirit.

We may have earned some money through the work we are employed to do but we have earned that money in exchange for the blessings we would get by knowing what the Word of God says.

Those blessings would probably have brought more money and a better quality of life than the small money we got from that job we hate.

Many Christians treat righteousness with mediocrity because they rarely study the Bible. They do not know that serving in the church is more blessed than sitting in church because it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). They do not know that traveling for mission work and getting involved in chaplaincy ministries is more blessed than staying in their home church because God wants us to teach all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Elisha would have stayed where he was as Elijah had suggested but he did not. He was determined to follow him wherever he went no matter the distance. Elijah was Elisha's master and he told Elisha to stay behind but Elisha refused. He was not being disrespectful to his master; he was showing utmost care for his master. He acted like Ruth, who was determined to stay with Naomi, no matter the cost.

Faith requires determination to stay the course, even when faced with challenges or opportunities to give up.

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Be Quiet

2 Kings 2:3 (AMP) – “Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, “Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it].””

2 Kings 2:5 (AMP) – “The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it].””

When the sons of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho asked Elisha if he knew that Elijah would be taken from him that day. Elisha told them that he knew and went ahead to tell them to be quiet about it. He told them to be secretive about it.

Amos 3:7 (NKJV) - "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." The event of Elijah being taken away by God was revealed to the prophets. Therefore, the sons of the prophets knew as a result of their parents telling them. When God reveals truth to you, He does not always require you to transmit it immediately.

Sometimes, God may need you to share it immediately and sometimes He may ask you to share it after some time. Truth goes with timing. For example, when someone has lost a spouse, the best truth to present to them at that time is the truth of the Comfort that Christ gives them. That is not the best time to tell them how bad it was for them to marry an unbelieving spouse and that the death of their spouse should serve as a lesson to them. We should not delight in hurting people with the truth. Instead, we should delight in teaching the truth in love.

Not all truth is meant for the public ear, some truth is personal and is meant for you alone because they are personal instructions to guide you in your personal life. Some truth is meant for a specific group and is purposed to guide that group. When God gives you a personal promise, that promise is meant for you and it is not meant to be shared with everyone else. Do not go around telling people, your ambitions, your aspirations, your goals, and the good things that God has promised you. Be quiet about them.

People will attempt to harm you when they view you as a threat, when they know what is awaiting you in the future. An excellent example is the ordeal between Joseph and his brothers. If the brothers to Joseph did not know of Joseph’s dreams, they would probably not have caused the harm that they caused him. One way to live in peace is to be secretive on your journey and only tell the people who are relevant to receive that information. For example, the mentors who are walking with you in that path.

2 Kings 4:4 (NKJV) - "And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

Elisha understood how important it is to keep some secrets. Therefore, he gave the widow a trade secret. He told her to shut the door and pour into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones. This

trade secret was to be known by the widow and her sons alone. You may have a goal in your mind. In your mind you can see all the possibilities at hand to attain that goal.

When you share the goal with friends, they start telling you all the impossibilities. Many people have failed to achieve what they were meant to achieve because they told unnecessary information to the wrong audience.

Proverbs 11:13 (NKJV) - "A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."

We should be careful when socializing and telling tales to our friends. This is because secrets are usually revealed when narrating stories. James 3:8 (NKJV) - "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." It is difficult to control the tongue, thus making it difficult to keep a secret. Therefore, one needs to be careful when they are in public.

Many people regret after they have said something that they were not supposed to say. Ellen G. White says that if we are able to control our diet, it shall be easy to have self-control over everything else including our tongues. God wants us to socialize. However, He does not want us to reveal unnecessary information to the wrong audience.

Not all secrets should be kept. Concealing evil is evil. Secrets that should be kept are those that God has communicated to you for your personal life, especially before you complete an assignment that He has given you. Before you finish the process, do what Elisha told the woman to do, shut the door.

Respect and Reverence

By insisting three times "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you," Elisha shows profound respect for both God and Elijah.

Elisha respected Elijah and God. He had walked with Elijah and deeply admired his relationship with God. He had seen the marvelous things that God had done for them while walking with Him. Thus, he made a firm decision not to leave Elijah.

Elisha knew that Elijah would leave him but he chose to stick by him until he left him. Therefore, Elisha told Elijah, the only thing that would make him leave him is through his death (Elisha's death) or through God's death (he said this knowing clearly that God cannot die).

Do we have such respect for our spiritual mentors? If we had such respect for them, we would hold on tightly to them and would not let them go. We would be more than willing to go through thick and thin with them. I have heard stories of people who went the extra mile to take the accusation when they heard that their pastor was being accused of a moral wrong doing. They chose to take the blame to keep the pastor from facing the shame.

Do not misunderstand me. Everybody should take responsibility for their own course of action and it is not right to do something wrong expecting that someone else is going to take responsibility for it. However, people who go an extra mile to show that level of respect by doing their best to cover someone else, show a very high level of selflessness.

We should show respect to our spiritual leaders, not to worship them but to work together with them and help them wherever necessary. Let us not feel that we have done so much for them and we need not do anything more. Elisha had probably done so much for Elijah but he was still willing to go an extra mile for Elijah, even when Elijah told him to rest and stay where he was.

Many of us are willing to do something good for someone but stop when that person refuses our offer. We should go the extra mile in insisting on helping out or giving because it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Genesis 19:2-3 (AMP) – "[2] He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside [and come] into your servant's house and stay all night, and wash your feet; then you can rise up early and go on your way." But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the open square." [3] Then he [Lot] urged them strongly [to come in]; so they turned aside with him and came into his house, and he prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate."

Lot showed respect to the men by inviting them to his house. He insisted gently for the visitors to stay with him. In return, he was saved from the destruction of the city in which he lived in. Every act of faith you do has a reward.

God will give us blessings beyond our imagination when we act by faith and show respect to everyone. Demonstrating respect and reverence for God and spiritual leaders is a key aspect of faith.

Seeking Spiritual Blessings

Elijah gave Elisha the opportunity to request from him what he wanted. Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This shows Elisha's desire for spiritual empowerment rather than material gains.

Matthew 6:33 (AMP) – "But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also."

Jesus Christ encourages us to seek spiritual things more than material things. This is what differentiates believers from unbelievers because the unbelievers (gentiles) seek material things first (Matthew 6:32). A man of God should have a higher, broader, and deeper understanding of life when compared to an unbeliever.

Atheists and some scientists who do not believe in God can only understand that which appeals to their five physical senses. Therefore, they limit themselves as they have closed their eyes to other available realities which are hidden in the spiritual realm. So, they do all that is physically possible within their scope to obtain material things. Their efforts do not amount to much because physicality is a manifestation of the reality that has been drawn from the spiritual domain.

Believers who have chosen to go the gentile (unbeliever) way, they get perplexed when they see the 'successes' that unbelievers have gained. They view those minimal gains that have been obtained by unbelievers as enormous gains. Such do not understand that they are children of a God who has infinite resources (since He has the ability to create) and who wants to give them things beyond their requests and imaginations.

Therefore, they use similar methods that are used by the unbelievers. Because they have not mastered that game as full-time unbelievers have, they end up losing at it. Thus, making

unbelievers more successful than them. You cannot use the same method that your secular boss uses to get at the same level as him or even higher.

If you choose to use the exact same method as him, it will take you the same number of years or more to get to his level and you may still be unable to reach that level. For example, if your secular boss is the type to work sixteen hours a day, having no time for God and family and you choose to use the same method as him, you may be successful but chances are slim that you would surpass his success.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a successful strategy that His followers should use that will help them get ahead in life. This strategy is found in Matthew 6:33. It is a common verse among Christians. They have heard it over and over again but unfortunately, many do not understand it or apply it. If they applied it effectively, they would access the best that God has in store for them.

Let me try to explain it. Matthew 6:33 tells us that if we seek God's kingdom first and His righteousness, God (the owner and giver of every good and perfect gift who has the best resources in infinite amounts) will easily add to your life His riches in glory.

If you approach a poor person to help you with money, he will not give you much because he does not have much. He can barely cater for his own needs. You may end up receiving nothing from him. If you approach a middle-class person who is living in a middle-class residential area and ask him to give you a mansion in an affluent suburb, he will not give it to you because he cannot afford it even for himself. He may give you a few things that are within his reach but not much. Therefore, placing too much dependence on such a person to provide for you will limit you to the level where he is.

If you approach a king or a president, he may give you more things than the middle-class person can because he has more but still the resources, they have in possession are limited. If you approach the richest man in the world, he may give you more than all people in the world can give you but still his resources are limited that is why their wealth can be counted even if they have a one hundred trillion-dollar net worth.

God is the One who gave all these resources to everyone in the world (including the richest men and women), whether they publicly acknowledge Him or not. God is the Creator of these resources.

Therefore, if all the resources in the universe got exhausted (which is quite impossible to exhaust), He will still create more.

I do not fully believe in a bad or good general economy. I believe in a bad or good individual economy because it is the individuals who determine the general economy. Isaac flourished when the general economy was bad as there was famine in the land because he was a genuine child of God. Some individuals have flourished during recessions and times when their countries were hitting rock bottom. When God favors you, you have more than enough, worldly policies and leaders do not need to favor you.

Matthew 7:7 (KJV) - "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." God wants to give you. He knows your needs but He wants you to ask, so that you can cultivate a relationship with Him. He knows if you have everything at hand, you may not talk to Him. Therefore, sometimes He may allow you to lack so that you talk to Him and get the blessings that come from talking to Him.

It is like the president, king or any other prominent official giving you plenty of appointments to go and meet them. In many countries, when you go to meet such people, they will give you something, usually in the form of money at the end of the meeting. Keep in mind that all these people are able to give you something at the end of the meeting. Despite their limitations and sinful nature, they are able to give you something. Sometimes what they give you is beyond your expectations.

For example, in 2013, at the State House in Kenya, Daniel Owira from Highway Secondary School (my former school) had the then President of Kenya, President Uhuru Kenyatta award him with great rewards. The president awarded him because he loved his narrative performance at the Kenya National Drama Festival State Concert. He promised to pay his school fees from secondary school to university, to revitalize his mother’s business, and support his elder sister Susan who worked as a volunteer. It was a life changing moment for Daniel as Daniel had almost given up on school since he could barely afford school fees.

If an earthly mortal and limited president can do such an amazing transformation to someone’s life, how much more can an immortal, limitless, and infinite God do? We may find time passing

by as we spend time on prayer and Bible study and wonder how we are going to recover that time which we think is lost. Here is the good news.

Time spent with God is never lost. An earthly president gave a young lad gifts beyond his imagination for performing something that probably did not take more than ten or fifteen minutes. How much will God give you when you spend more time with Him? Spending time with God will accelerate you to levels more sooner than your hard work and smart work combined.

God wants to give you. The question is, how does God give? James 1:5 (AMP) - "If any of you lacks wisdom [to guide him through a decision or circumstance], he is to ask of [our benevolent] God, who gives to everyone generously and without rebuke or blame, and it will be given to him." God gives liberally and generously. Someone can be rich but stingy but God is infinitely wealthy and infinitely generous.

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and God gave him wisdom beyond measure. His immeasurable wisdom aided him in obtaining immeasurable wealth. If God can give you wisdom generously, He can give you wealth generously, He can bless your family generously, He can give you good health generously. He can give you all the good, admirable, and helpful things generously. God added Solomon riches, wealth, and honor because He asked for a spiritual thing (wisdom) (1 Kings 3:10-13; 2 Chronicles 1:11-12).

When Elijah told Elisha to make a request, Elisha did not ask for material things because he esteemed the spiritual above the material. Many people neglect church duties and God’s service because it does not pay in direct cash. In most churches worldwide, you do not receive money for being in the praise and worship team or in the choir. You do not receive money for being a Sabbath or a Sunday school teacher. You do not receive money for being an elder or a deacon.

Sometimes and often church service is looked down upon. For example, in Kenya, when someone wants to describe a job that is not offering pay or is offering little pay, they use the Swahili expression ‘Kazi ya Kanisa’ (directly translated it means church work). So, those who have little trust in God refuse to use their talents, skills and abilities to serve God because according to them, that service does not pay and they cannot use their abilities for free. The truth is, people may not pay but God will always pay because God is not a robber. There is no moment that is offered to His service that He will fail to pay.

Sometimes, God may pay immediately and other times the payment may seem like it is delayed. From my personal experience, the so-called delayed payments always result in bigger payments. I feel that when you are seeking God for a financial breakthrough and it seems to take more time than expected, it has delayed because God is fattening it and fattening you (spiritually) so that you can have the capacity to receive the fattened gift.

Jacob esteemed the spiritual above the material while Esau esteemed the material above the spiritual. Thus, Jacob was able to gain more than Esau who despised his birthright in exchange of a plate of food. It is an act of faith to esteem the spiritual (what you cannot see) above the material (what you can see).

God wants you to esteem the good things that you cannot see above the good things that you can see. This is because it was the good thing that you cannot see (God’s Word) that created the good things that you can see (the visible world) (Hebrews 11:3). Faith in God should drive us to seek spiritual growth and blessings, aspiring to fulfill God's work with greater power.

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Understanding God's Timing

Elisha is aware of the imminent departure of Elijah but chooses not to dwell on it. He responds to the sons of the prophets by saying, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]" (2 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 2:5 AMP).

Most of us stress ourselves because we expect something to happen at a time, we have set then when it fails to happen, we get disappointed. Our work should be to do all we can in the present time, then let God do what He can at the time that He best chooses. Some of us might have kept

their dream cars and houses as their wall papers on their phones while some as posters on their walls. Every morning when you wake up and before you sleep you look at that photo and feel frustrated that you have not yet gotten what you desire.

When you focus on worldly things, getting them will feel like chasing after the wind. When you feel that you have finally gotten them, you realize that you are still far off from getting them. When you try to chase the wind, no matter how fast you run you cannot catch it. A new strategy that you would need to adapt is to shift your focus and redirect it to God.

When you direct your focus to God, all these things you are chasing will chase you or rather, they will be attracted to you. One may wonder how this will happen. One example is, when you focus on God, the Creator refines your character and personality, thus making you more attractive and more trusted to clients if you are running a business. Therefore, learn to trust in God and believe that He will bring it to pass at the proper time.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV) - "Let us not become weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Lamentations 3:25 (KJV) – “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

Faith involves understanding and trusting God's timing and plans, without becoming distracted by what others say or think.

Witnessing Miracles

2 Kings 2:8 (AMP) – “And Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the waters, and they were divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.”

Elisha witnessed Elijah's miracles, like the parting of the Jordan River, which reinforced his faith in God's power. Some Christians say that the Biblical stories are allegories and they are not real because the wonders witnessed in the Bible are not easily seen in the world. Therefore, they limit the Holy Book to fit their knowledge and understanding instead of finding a space inside God’s Word to abide in. This method leads to errors in our life.

The results that our faithless lives produce leave little to be admired. Thus, by the low quality of our lives, outsiders are not inspired to come to Christ. Elisha had probably read or heard the ancient story of Moses parting the Red Sea. He might have believed it but his belief might not have been firm because he had not witnessed it. The miracle happening caused him to confirm that the stories in the Bible are real.

Many people do not fully believe in God because they have not witnessed the power of God doing wonders that seem impossible to be done. Some have witnessed but because they rarely abide by God's side, they easily forget what God had previously done to them and to people around them.

One reason people rarely witness miracles happening is because they do not spend enough time with God. They do not go to church and if they do, they attend church service and once it is over, they go about their business till the next week when there is another church service. They do not go for outreach and missions. They do not visit the sick and needy. They rarely pray for their friends and relatives. They barely use their talents and abilities to serve God.

Therefore, they are quick to conclude that miracles do not happen in these modern days simply because they have not witnessed one. There is a lot of mediocrity in Christianity when compared to other religions. God desires us to see great wonders and miracles. He commands us to have faith in action and He wants us to watch Him as He leads by example by doing tremendous actions.

Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV) - "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

Close communion with God will make you know things that you did not know before. It will make you understand things that you did not understand before. It will make you see things that you did not see before. If Elisha was at home sleeping when Elijah was parting the Jordan River, he would not have seen the miracle happening.

Elisha saw that great miracle because he was busy conducting God's assignment. He saw that miracle because he was spending time together with a man of God. He saw that miracle because he had gone an extra mile to do what he was not asked to do as Elijah had told him to stay where he was. All in all, he saw that miracle because he exercised faith in action.

When Jesus called His disciples, most of the time as is recorded in the Bible, He would tell them, “Follow Me.” He did not tell them all that they were going to witness and experience once they followed Him. They were to agree to follow him first by faith before they witnessed all that He had to offer. The disciples had the privilege to witness more miracles done by Jesus than the other people because they walked closely with Him.

Some people, by reading or hearing one Bible verse, their lives have been completely transformed. Ask yourself, how much more will your life be transformed if you commit to studying your Bible daily? A daily walk with God will give you the privilege to witness things beyond your imagination. It will inspire you to act by faith in everything you do. And as a result, God will set you on high above all nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1).

2 Kings 2:9 (AMP) – “And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.””

After that miraculous event (parting the waters) is when Elisha asked Elijah to give him a double portion of his spirit. When we walk with God and witness the marvelous things that He can do we would not shy off from requesting him to give us our heart’s desires. We should not shy off from telling Him our ambitions and dreams no matter how lofty they are.

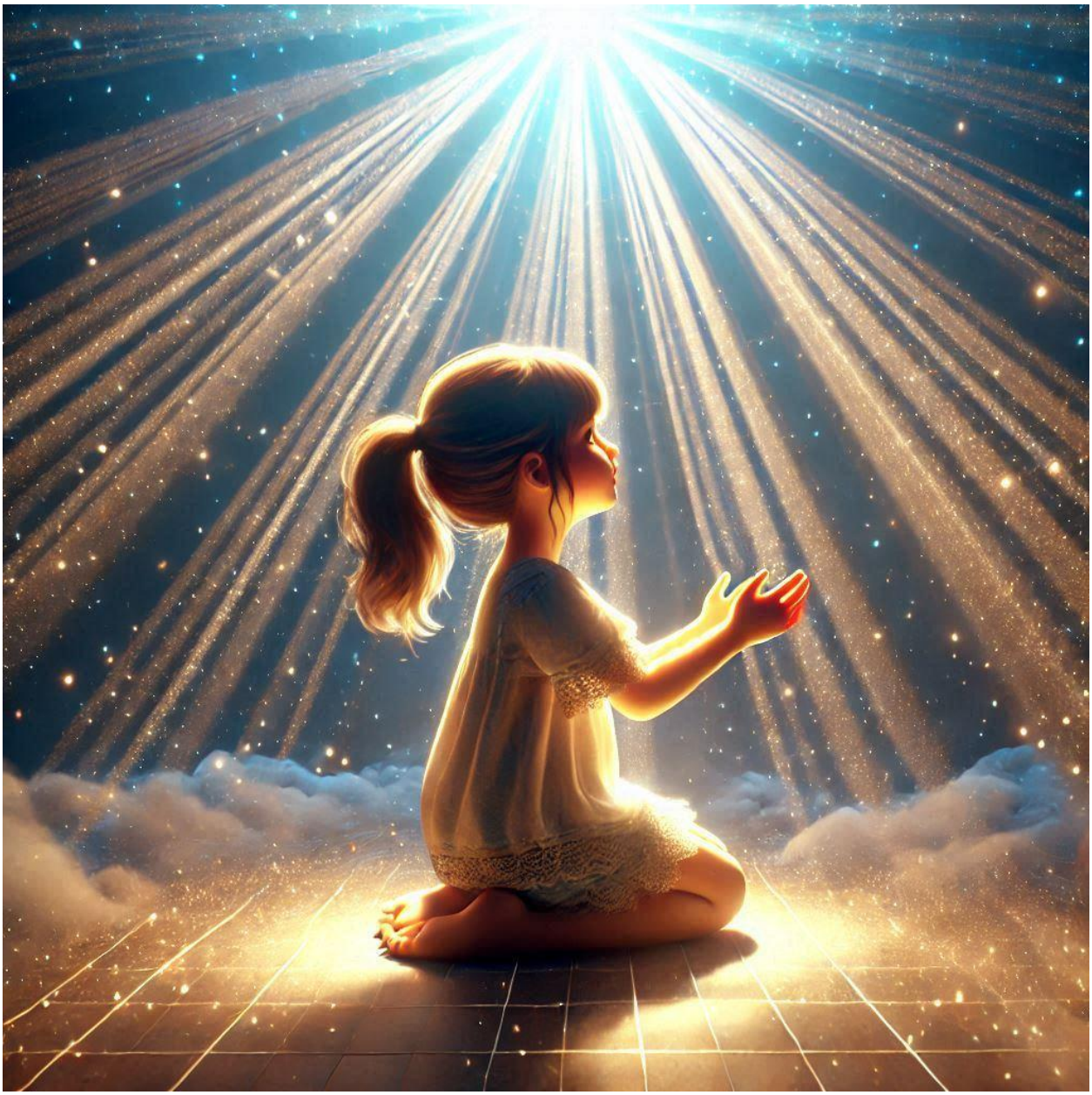
Elisha had witnessed Elijah do marvelous work and He understood that whatever Elijah did was made possible by God’s power. Elisha believed the God who gave Elijah that power was able to give him the same power or more than because he knew God’s power transcends all the mighty things that He had witnessed Elijah doing.

John 14:12 (KJV) - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father."

Jesus tells us that if we believe in Him, we will do greater things than He did while on this earth. The question is, by whose power will we do those things? By His power. Jesus wants us not only to witness miracles but to be able to do those miracles. When Elisha saw Elijah parting the Jordan River, he wished to have that ability. So, he asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit. The closer you move to God; the more people are going to be astonished by your actions because God is an astonishing God. He is not a boring God.

Observing and acknowledging God's work in our lives and the lives of others strengthens our faith. Elisha’s faith allows him to witness other profound divine events, for example, the chariot of fire and Elijah’s ascension to heaven. A life of faith can lead to witnessing extraordinary acts of God, strengthening our belief and testimony.

An Honest Request



2 Kings 2:9 (AMP) – "And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.""

In our daily conversations we are used to telling people what we think they want to hear. We try our best to sound politically correct. One may wonder, since everybody is good by the proof of the testimony of their lips, who are the bad ones? Ask any two random people who have separated from a relationship or partnership, they will tell you how bad the other person was and how good they were.

Everybody will tell you or insinuate to you that they are humble. For example, when you give someone a compliment, they will respond with a modest reply like "I'm trying." When you invite a visitor to your home, most will pretend they do not eat a lot. Many Christians would pretend how they hate money and will make abundance in material wealth appear sinful, but the same people spend most of their hours in a day working for money.

The same people will not say no to a promotion or a pay rise at their job. The same people study courses, so that they can get ahead in their careers and earn more money. Unfortunately, we live in a world where everybody looks, sounds, and acts like everybody else, thus robbing the world of our true unique identity.

These habits of deception make some people not to sleep peacefully at night. Unaware of its harmful effects, dishonesty does to us injustice beyond what our minds can fathom. Some people have sunk into depression and some have committed suicide as a result of an accumulation of such behaviors. It is like we have been deeply infused in a long running movie role and acted that role for too long that we have ended up forgetting who we truly are. Because of that, we can barely differentiate between what is true and what is not.

Unfortunately, we take those habits that we use to help us fit in the world to worship God. The same way we try to be politically correct with men is the same way we try to be politically correct with God. Elements of our worship are inauthentic. We sing songs like an automated singing bot without the song coming from our hearts. We have memorized songs that we barely know the meaning of.

The same thing happens when we pray, we have certain words that we say in our prayers that are not heartfelt. The way we pray is like we are ticking off something from a to-do list. We tell God what we think He wants to hear, instead of speaking our hearts out. What we do not know is that no matter how correct and proper we may try to sound, our sinful nature will always prevent our prayers from being fully perfect.

Another thing we do not understand is that the Holy Spirit is there to perfect our prayers, making intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. We get frustrated because we ask God for things that we do not really want and when He gives them to us, we complain. You would rather ask God for exactly what you want, despite how stupid and unrealistic it may sound.

God is not like a human being who will judge you harshly and shun you off for presenting to Him 'weird' requests. He will embrace you in His arms with love and give you the right direction if what you are asking is in the wrong direction. If you insist, He may allow you to have it to prove to you that you need to trust Him and follow His direction.

Also, on the positive hand, God might have placed a desire in your heart that is not common among other people. When you share that desire with your friends, they might feel that you are weird and foolish, but when you request it from God, He gets excited because He wants to give it to you. God might even direct you to Bible verses to ensure you that whatever you are asking for is indeed according to His will.

"Since worship involves delighting in God, it engages your emotions. God gave you emotions so you could worship Him with deep feeling—but those emotions must be genuine, not faked. God hates hypocrisy. He doesn't want showmanship or pretense or phoniness in worship. He wants your honest, real love. We can worship God imperfectly, but we cannot worship Him insincerely." – A Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren.

Elisha did not shy off from asking Elijah what he truly wanted. He went ahead and asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit. He probably wanted to do great and mighty things than Elijah did and that is why he requested to have more power than Elijah. Why can't we go to God with the promise in John 14:12 and tell Him that we want to do greater things than Jesus did while on this earth? Why don't we go to Him and ask Him to give us more wisdom than Solomon and more strength than Samson? God wants us to approach Him with the heart of a child.

A child before he/she gets corrupted with the negative thinking of this world has a mind filled with possibilities. Children believe that everything is possible. They have a wide imagination. A boy child will often think of having Superman like powers while a girl child will often think of living a fairy tale life riding horses like a princess. God wants us to approach Him with that mind and attitude. He wants us to go to Him, strongly believing that with Him, nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37).

Mark 9:33-37 (NKJV) – "[33] Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" [34] But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the* greatest. [35] And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." [36] Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, [37] "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

The disciples of Jesus were disputing among themselves concerning who would be the greatest. Jesus knew what they were quarreling about but He still asked them. When He asked them, they kept silent. They felt shy to tell him because they probably felt that what they were discussing was not right. Jesus did not tell them that what they were discussing was wrong. Instead, He gave them a formula on how to be the greatest. He told them if any of them wants to be great, they must humble themselves and serve others.

"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." By telling them this, He was telling them the more humble you are and the more people you serve, the greater you will be. Someone who serves a billion people is greater than one who serves a thousand people. If you are a mentor, ask yourself, how many people do you serve (mentor)? If you are a business owner, ask yourself, how many clients do you serve? If you have only focused on the local market, you are not serving enough people. Try breaking into the international market because Christ has called us to go out there and reach out to all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus Christ did not tell His followers that being great or wanting to be great was a bad thing. He told them how to be great. Many of us, like the disciples, feel guilty because of some of the desires we have in our hearts. Some of us desire to be great but we feel guilty because we think it is not in accordance to God's will. Some of us want to be very rich materially but we feel guilty because

we think it is not God's desire. There is no problem in wanting to be great or wanting to be the best in anything. The problem lies in the motive behind that ambition if it is an evil motive.

God wants us all to be great and to be the best in our purpose and calling. That is why Jesus gave His disciples a formula on how to be the greatest. If He did not want them to be great, He would not have given them that formula.

We should be open to God and tell Him our deepest heart's desires. God might have instilled a certain desire in our hearts but because we have a sinful nature that desire is tainted with the sin that is dwelling in our hearts. Therefore, thoughts of pride and selfishness encompass that desire. Since sinful thoughts are surrounding our innermost ambitions; we are afraid to go to God to ask Him for that which we actually want.

We should not be afraid to open our hearts to God, telling Him what we truly want. When we go to God, God will sanctify us and make the desire that is deep inside our heart of hearts be pure and holy. Many of us want something specific but when we go to God, we pray general prayers to make our prayers sound perfect.

For example, one may specifically want a girl child but when they go to God, they are not specific of the gender of the child that they want. One may want a top government job but when they go to God, they are not specific with that request because they think it is not God's will to give them a top position.

In the teen class that I teach at church, one of the students, Niah, also known as Happy, gave a testimony. She said she lived as an only child for some years in the first years of her life (around seven to ten years). She said she prayed for a sibling, and she was specific that she wanted a girl sibling so that she could get someone to talk to as she was lonely. She said God blessed her with a sister who is now called Hope. She said after she got a sister, she prayed for a brother and God blessed her with a brother who is called Amani (Swahili word meaning peace).

Another lady in church called Emmy told me that she prayed to have two boys, and two girls and God blessed her with two boys and two girls. Their names are: Eva, Eliud, Eda and Eric. Emmy told me that God has answered all her prayers.

God wants you to be honest. God wants you to be specific. We should not be afraid to ask God for anything. That is the essence of friendship. True friendship is cultivated in openness. A Swahili proverb goes, “Mficha uchi hazai.” Translated it means, “One who hides his nakedness cannot give birth.” For example, when you are a teacher or a parent and you try to appear perfect before your children only telling them of your success and not of your failures, you may not get much success in the transformation of their character.

In the Book, The 16 Laws of Communication, John Calvin Maxwell says, “when you tell people of your achievements you win their respect but when you tell them of your failures, you win their love.” Therefore, he urges people, when communicating, they should know how to balance that. Pastor Anthony Mwangi encourages mentors to not only show their medals but also their scars if they want to be successful in mentorship.

Some young people, especially teenagers, get frustrated because they struggle in solitude, feeling that nobody understands them. They might be struggling with a habit like masturbation, or lustful desires or even drugs. The only stories that their parents and teachers narrate to them are of how good they were when they were young and how they managed to achieve what they achieved. Being open brings more fruit than not being open.

A simple example is, I have seen people earning a living out of giving 'strange' personal stories of how they were abused in the past or how they contracted HIV/AIDS. It is through their openness that they put food on their tables.

When I started teaching teenagers and children in church in 2022, many students used to be astonished at my ‘mastery’ of the Bible as I would quote verses from the Bible, particularly from the King James Version without reading. This habit amazes people in the churches where I have had an opportunity to speak. It is a habit that was influenced in me through watching and listening to Pastor Randy Skeete on YouTube.

Many people have applauded it. For example, a teenager called Mitchelle once came and told me (the conversation was in Swahili, but I am writing it in English for the wider audience to understand), “Teacher, do you know what amazes me about you?” I permitted her to go ahead and tell me. I could not wait to hear (we all love compliments). She went ahead and said, “What amazes

me is how you have mastered the Bible." After she said that, I was not very excited because in my mind, I wished she said what she liked about me is how my teaching has transformed her life.

Therefore, from that time henceforth, I have been trying my best with the help of God when preparing for a lesson, to come up with ways that I can make that lesson transformative. This is because I realized, it does not amount to much when students get wowed on the knowledge and mastery I have of the subject if the lesson does not actively do a special work of transformation in their lives. So, I resolved to be open about my failures in life.

The main ambition behind this was to give them a sense of hope. In their minds, they might say, "If this teacher used to have this behavior but now, he has this mastery of the Bible, it is possible for me to transform and be a better person." When I did that, I realized that students started pulling closer to me. Some started approaching me in their free time to seek mentorship and guidance. How did I get there? By being open.

We should be open with men when we are called upon to do so, but most importantly, we should be open with God in our worship, in our prayers. A human being may see us as too petty when we go and tell them some things. Not God. Closeness with God is fostered when we make those inconsequential prayers, when we tell Him of every little thing that we are worrying about or that we want Him to give us.

A child in church came to me, and asked me to guess her birthday. I prayed silently in my heart and told her it is April and she said I am right. Another child came to me, clenching his fists and told me to tell him in which hand he had placed a coin. I prayed silently in my heart then I pointed to the hand he had placed the coin. He opened his hands and we both found out that I was right. No prayers are too inconsequential to present to God.

Do you want to be more physically attractive? Ask God. Do you wish to be taller or more muscular? Ask God. Do you want to never grow old physically? Ask God. Some Christian leaders and teachers have made us believe that God can only enhance the inner beauty and not the outer. God promises to give us new bodies when we go to heaven. In other words, He promises to enhance our physical appearance.

The Bible describes various people as being physically good-looking like Abraham's wife Sarah, Isaac's wife Rebecca and Jacob's wife Rachel and Joseph (Jacob and Rachel's son) among others.

If physical beauty was not important, the Bible would not have mentioned it. We usually think that God is only willing to refine our character but He is not willing to refine our physical appearance.

As a result, when trying to enhance their physical beauty, especially ladies (and sometimes men), people resolve to all cosmetic procedures, some of them being harmful which at the end causes them great harm. They never involve God when doing those procedures. They only go to God when things go wrong.

God is the Creator of the inner beauty as well as the outer. He will not look upon you as being a lover of vanity when you approach Him concerning the worries you have about your physical appearance. It is easy for other people to tell someone that they need to be comfortable in their own skin and that they need to appreciate how they were created. Such words are good but they may fail to impact on how one feels about themselves. When you go to God with such worries, He will give you real comfort and make you believe that you are wonderfully and fearfully made.

He may use various ways to do this. He may place people around you who will genuinely make you feel great about yourself because sometimes physical unattractiveness comes as a result of lack of confidence and low self-esteem. He may bring opportunities to you that you would not have gotten if you looked different from how you look. Sometimes, someone may fail to appear attractive because they do not have peace and joy in their hearts. Peace and joy are attributes of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Once a person possesses them, they will appear to be more physically attractive than they were before. Obedience to God enhances physical beauty.

“As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty. The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 45.3, Ellen G. White.

God may give you tips on how to appear more attractive like smiling, being humble, exercising, drinking water, and fasting. He may lead you to use plants that are natural cosmetics in the natural environment that will bring better results and are healthier than the manufactured ones. He may

also enhance your physical appearance through divine intervention without you having to use anything since He is the Creator. God is not just the Creator; He is your Creator.

What kind of wife are you looking for? If you are looking for a beautiful wife, what skin color would you like her to have? How long would you want her hair to be? What kind of body shape would you want her to have? Take all these requests to God.

Spiritual growth is not fostered in perfect communication with God. The carnal mind can never communicate anything perfectly to God. Spiritual growth is fostered through our imperfect communication with God. As we grow spiritually, we are able to learn more on how to communicate better with God. God should be revered and respected, but that does not call us to fake our worship or prayers. We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Before we do anything, we do, we ought to pray no matter how small or inconsequential it may seem.

Matthew 20:20-28 (AMP) – "[20] Then [Salome] the mother of Zebedee's children [James and John] came up to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down [in respect], asked a favor of Him. [21] And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit [in positions of honor and authority] one on Your right and one on Your left." [22] But Jesus replied, "You do not realize what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup [of suffering] that I am about to drink?" They answered, "We are able." [23] He said to them, "You will drink My cup [of suffering]; but to sit on My right and on My left this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." [24] And when the [other] ten heard this, they were resentful *and* angry with the two brothers. [25] But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles have absolute power *and* lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them [tyrannizing them]. [26] It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, [27] and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your [willing and humble] slave; [28] just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many [paying the price to set them free from the penalty of sin]."

Salome, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with a request. They were united in one accord and needed that request done to them. The request was for one son to sit on the right side of Jesus while the other one to sit on the left side of Jesus in heaven. Jesus heard their request but He did not shun them. He did not tell them that whatever they requested for

was wrong. Instead, He told them that they did not know what they were asking for. As I was about to complete my university studies, I went to one of my university instructors called Ben Kioni and told him that I want to be an entrepreneur and asked him if he could mentor me on that path.

Ben agreed and told me that he has no problem with that request but first I have to be ready. He insisted that I have to be ready. At that time, I did not fully understand what he meant until later on when I embarked on the entrepreneurship journey, I realized that it was indeed a tough journey.

Jesus Christ responded to James, John, and Salome in almost the same way. He told them that they do not recognize the heaviness of the role that they were asking. We admire celebrities, presidents, top business people but we do not know the weight of responsibility that is on their shoulders. The burden of everybody in the world is quite heavy to bear. Jesus humbled Himself even while facing the most humiliating circumstances. He had the power to retaliate but He did not do so.

Those who desired greatness, to sit right next to Him in the kingdom of heaven, would have to bear a great deal of responsibility which would come with almost the same pain that Jesus encountered. Jesus did not look down on them, nor did He get angry with them for making such a request. It was the other disciples (fellow human beings) who were angry with them.

Human beings may despise you when you tell them your secrets and wishes but God will never despise you. God knows everything about you. He sees all the weird things that you do when you are alone. He knows your real character. Not only does He know your real character, but He also knows what you can do if you had the opportunity to. He knows you more than you know yourself. Therefore, it is vital that we should approach Him with faith and that includes approaching Him with honesty.

When you tell your lofty desires to human beings, they may discourage you for various reasons. Some will discourage you because they are jealous and they wish they had that ambition. Some will discourage you because they have not been able to attain what you want to attain. If King Josiah told people that he wanted to be king when he was eight years old, almost everybody around him would have told him how impossible his dreams were. Some would have even come with intellectual arguments filled with lots of historical evidence to prove to him that what he wanted was impossible because it had never happened.

When Elizabeth and her husband told their relatives and friends that the child would be named John, they refused because no one in their lineage had that name. Most people base their opinions on what has happened, not knowing that what has not yet happened is more than what has happened. Most studies are based on facts and findings that have already happened. That is why depending on the available studies while omitting God makes one's knowledge, wisdom and understanding to be shallow and narrow.

You can limit what you talk about with human beings but you should feel free when talking to God. You just have to ensure that as you converse with God, you do it respectfully. After hearing James and John's request, Jesus went ahead and gave them a proper direction in pursuing their ambition. He started by showing them how unbelievers (gentiles) conduct their leadership. He told them that unbelievers are used to showcasing their authority and commanding respect from people by being tyrannical and dictatorial. He went ahead and gave them a unique leadership and management strategy.

Jesus told them if they want to be the greatest leaders they should be humble, they should serve and they should be willing to sacrifice for others. “Command respect” is a well-known common phrase that may seem true but is misleading. Leaders in all spheres, from industry to family, have used this tactic and some might have thought that it has brought them success while in reality it has not. Respect cannot be commanded or demanded; it is earned.

When a person uses tactics to instill fear on his subordinates and they end up doing what he has commanded them to do, the people might do it out of fear, not out of respect. As a result, such leaders will think that they have gained success as people are doing what they have been commanded to do.

Is this really success? Truly successful actions are actions done out of influence and genuine respect, not out of command and fear. There is a big difference between doing something that you have been forced to do and doing something that you want to do. There is a huge difference between doing something from the heart and doing something to merely fulfill an obligation.

Just like the disciples of Jesus, Elisha had a lofty ambition. He wanted to do twice the great works that Elijah had done. Elijah, being a genuine man of God, did not discourage him. The best people to be around are genuine men and women of God. People who want the best for you. People who

inspire the best out of you. People who make you feel the best about yourself. People who do the best for you. People who give the best to you. Such people are the best for you.

God loves it when we think big beyond what we know we can do because it gives Him the chance to intervene in our efforts. God intervenes in all our righteous efforts whether big or small. However, when you think small and pursue small ambitions, you may not do them as excellently as God requires you to do them. If you are successful in them, you may not really see the hand of God in them, even though the hand of God is always present in our profits. This may cause you to run into the error of thinking that you have managed to do all that by yourself.

As a result, you may fail to acknowledge God and give thanks to Him. However, when you pursue lofty ambitions that seem unrealistic, you are likely going to involve God in their pursuit because you will need Him to fill for your inadequacy. Bishop Wayne Malcolm emphasizes that it is righteous to think big because when you think big you may come to a realization that without God whatever you are pursuing is impossible.

“Heart is the symbol of creative activity. Fire the heart with where you want to go and what you want to be. Get it so deeply fixed in your unconscious that you will not take no for an answer, then your entire personality will follow where your heart leads. "Throw your heart over the bar" means to throw your faith over your difficulty, throw your affirmation over every barrier, throw your visualization over your obstacles. In other words, throw the spiritual essence of you over the bar and your material self will follow in the victory groove thus pioneered by your faith-inspired mind. Expect the best, not the worst, and you will attain your heart's desire. It is what is in the heart of you, either good or bad, strong, or weak, that finally comes to you. Emerson said, "Beware of what you want for you will get it."” – The Power of Positive Thinking, Norman Vincent Peale.

Steve Harvey said that his favorite books are: The Magic of Thinking Big by David J. Schwartz and The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale. He added on to say, “It doesn’t take any more brain power to think big than it does to think small.” Let us have a desire for big things so that we can use them to serve as many people as possible for the glory of God, like Elisha. Let us not shy off from telling GOD our lofty ambitions and aspirations. Let us love to make honest requests to God.

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Willingness to take Greater Responsibilities

2 Kings 2:9 (AMP) – “And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.””

Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit indicated his readiness to take on greater responsibilities and continue Elijah's work. Having walked closely with Elijah, Elisha understood

the great responsibility that laid on Elijah's shoulders. He had watched him face opposition and persecution from forces which seemed greater.

Elisha probably understood that receiving a double portion of Elijah's spirit translated to him receiving twice the responsibilities that Elijah received. He was interested in serving God more and he knew that he might encounter great tribulation as a result of that great service. We live in a world where everyone wants to blame others and few want to be responsible for their own actions. There are very few people in the world taking the mantle of leadership because very few people are willing to take responsibility.

Faith is shown in taking responsibilities. The greater the level of faith, the more responsibility one will be willing to take. Taking responsibility fosters excellence. If a church pastor would take responsibility for the spiritual growth of the church members, he will do his best to ensure that the members grow spiritually. He may not succeed immediately because the work of saving souls and sanctifying them is God's work, but he will have done his best and God will bless his efforts at the right time.

If leaders of countries, government ministries, organizations and companies would take full responsibility things will go well. Corruption and unjust practices will be very few. If you and I would take responsibility of the environment, ensuring that everywhere we walk is clean and tidy, we would live in a very healthy environment and many of the diseases that we encounter in society won't be there.

Many people go out there looking for better jobs but they haven't taken full responsibility for where they currently are. One might be dreaming to be a Cabinet Secretary or an Ambassador of a country or any other top position but he has neglected the leadership role that needs him most, and that is the leadership of where he is currently at.

For example, he has not been excellent in his current position, always coming late to work and doing various malpractices at the workplace. You may find that he has not been excellent in his leadership at home, he barely has time for his family. God would ask such a person, "If you do not have time for your family at this level that you are in, how sure are you that you will have time for your family if I give you a promotion at work with greater responsibilities?"

Therefore, to save him and his family from more damage, God ends up not giving him that position. A fresh graduate might be busy looking and praying for a job but he has neglected the opportunities around him. He does not help with house chores at home. He is not willing to volunteer his skills in church and he has not exhausted the money-making opportunities that are around him.

One might have started an environmental organization with a vision of doing great and astonishing environmental projects in his country or in the world. It is good to have lofty ambitions as we discussed earlier but the same person does not take care of the environment, he or she is in. The person barely cleans his room and his house. He rarely makes his bed. If he sees litter on the ground as he is walking, he does not stop to collect it because he is expecting someone else to do it. While you pray for God to give you what you want Him to give you, ask yourself, have you taken full responsibility for everyone and everything around you?

John 17:6-12 (AMP) – "[6] "I have manifested Your name [and revealed Your very self, Your real self] to the people whom You have given Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept *and* obeyed Your word. [7] Now [at last] they know [with confident assurance] that all You have given Me is from You [it is really and truly Yours]. [8] For the words which You gave Me I have given them; and they received *and* accepted them and truly understood [with confident assurance] that I came from You [from Your presence], and they believed [without any doubt] that You sent Me. [9] I pray for them; I do not pray for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You; [10] and all things that are Mine are Yours, and [all things that are] Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. [11] I am no longer in the world; yet they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, so that they may be one just as We are. [12] While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them *and* protected them, and not one of them was lost except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

When Jesus called the twelve disciples, He took full responsibility for them. He walked with them and taught them, not just by words but by example. Therefore, when He was praying the prayer in John 17, He was giving God the Father an account of his actions. He was taking accountability for the work He did. Therefore, He says, "Not one of them was lost except the son of destruction

(Judas)." Of the twelve disciples, only Judas was lost. Judas was lost by his own choice. If he had repented, he would have been forgiven by God.

Judas betraying Jesus led to the fulfillment of the scriptures. Therefore, everything all together ended up to the success of the gospel. When you take full responsibility and put God at the center of all you do, a few things may go amiss but everything in general will be successful. Some of the things which might have seemed to go amiss, usually end up contributing to the success of the entire thing, thus achieving the goal.

Matthew 25:24-28 (AMP) – "[24] "The one who had received one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a harsh *and* demanding man, reaping [the harvest] where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter *seed*. [25] So I was afraid [to lose the talent], and I went and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is your own.' [26] "But his master answered him, 'You wicked, lazy servant, you knew that I reap [the harvest] where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter *seed*. [27] Then you ought to have put my money with the bankers, and at my return I would have received my *money* back with interest. [28] So take the talent away from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'"

The master had given his three servants different amounts of talents. He gave them talents according to their various abilities (Matthew 25:15). The one who had the greatest ability, he gave him five talents, for he knew that he would increase it. The one with the least ability, he gave him one talent because he did not want his many talents to go to waste. He probably knew that this person did not like to take responsibility.

The master might have known that this person would not multiply the talents given to him. However, to be fair and just, he gave him only one talent so that he does not have an excuse and say, he had nothing to increase. The third servant feared taking responsibility for that one talent that was given to him. Therefore, he went and hid it in the ground. When the master came, he was angry at him, took his talent and gave it to the most responsible, the first servant.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) – "[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

In the Sabbath commandment, God commands us to take responsibility for those He has kept under our care. He uses the family setting as a basic unit while giving this commandment since the family is the most basic unit of association in a society. Therefore, He talks about sons, daughters, servants, and animals that are within one's homestead. God is commanding us to be responsible for those under us and ensure that none of them works on Sabbath. The commandment is serious to an extent that it also talks about the animals that are within our care.

There is no way a father of a home can say they keep the Sabbath but has given out duties for those under him to carry out. In the same way, the owner of an organization cannot say they keep the Sabbath but they give those under them work to do on Sabbath. Taking responsibility entails caring for the salvation of the person within your reach.

Before we evangelize to those outside, we should ensure that those under us and within our reach have received God's message loud and clear. There is a reason people are born and nurtured in homes before they are taken elsewhere. As mentioned in the Sabbath commandment, the home is the place where we need to take responsibility first. One powerful way of doing that is by teaching them the God's Word.

Some people who are born in Sabbath keeping homes do not keep the Sabbath because they do not understand it. Therefore, as the head of the house, it is your obligation to teach them. Secondly, ensure that no work is being done on Sabbath within your homestead. God commands us but He does not force us. As a leader, you should command the people at your home to do what is right but do not force them. This is because when you use force you omit love. Using force equates to depending on your own effort and strength to change someone instead of depending on God. This usually leads to having more stress and worries.

In the organization that you own, use the same strategy. Make it clear that there is no working on Sabbath. Ensure that the machines of that organization are not used on Saturday, especially for non-spiritual purposes. However, if someone chooses to secretly work on Sabbath, leave that to God because you cannot control him/her. As long as you have taken responsibility for what is within your scope, God will applaud you and bless you for that.

Ezekiel 33:6-9 (AMP) – "[6] But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, he is taken away because of his corruption *and* sin; but I will require his blood from the watchman's hand.' [7] "Now as for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you shall hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me. [8] When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will certainly die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die because of his sin; but I will require his blood from your hand. [9] But if you on your part warn the wicked man to turn from his [evil] way and he does not turn from his [evil] way, he will die in his sin; but you have saved your life."

God is commanding Prophet Ezekiel to take responsibility for the people. In this context, Ezekiel is the watchman as his work is to keep watch and warn the people of the impending danger of sin. He is expected to blow the trumpet which means to proclaim God's message. If he does not do that, God will judge the people for their own sins and He will hold Ezekiel responsible for not taking responsibility to proclaim God's message.

Ezekiel needs to blow the trumpet loud enough so that everyone can hear it. If he does not blow it loud enough and some people fail to hear it, God will hold him accountable too. However, if he takes responsibility and blows the trumpet loud enough and people refuse to hear God's call, God will hold the people responsible but will not hold Ezekiel accountable. As Christians we are all called to evangelize.

We need not only to blow the trumpet but we should also blow it loud enough so that everyone hears it. This calls us to use everything that God has put inside us and is within our reach to make the message loud and clear. It can be something as simple as people watching you carrying your Bible proudly while going to church.

"Deathbed speeches or last words tend to be urgent and pointed. This is the case with the "last" words of Christ prior to His ascension. His famous "last words" are known as the Great Gospel Commission. One may just as accurately say the Great Good News Commission, or the Great Gospel Command! Failure to carry out this commission is blatant disobedience to a command of God, as verily as adultery is a violation of the seventh commandment! The disciple of Christ must understand that the commission to evangelize is not an option but a solemn life-or-death obligation.

Other than Christ, Paul probably had the clearest view of the urgent nature of evangelism. He wrote in 1 Cor 9: 16, “For if I preach the gospel, no glory is to me; for necessity is laid on me, and it is woe to me if I preach not the gospel.” Woe to me! I would be miserable. In this verse, there is neither hint nor tint of option. There is a tonnage of obligation, of responsibility. Paul had no choice: he had to preach the gospel! This is obligation!

Jeremiah wrote, “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20: 9). This is obligation!” - Pastor Randy Skeete.

Are you willing to take the great responsibility given to you by God of evangelism?

If we want to lead, we should love taking responsibilities. Like Elisha, faith in God prepares us to step into larger roles and greater challenges, trusting in God's provision and empowerment.

Faith in the Face of Uncertainty

Elisha does not know exactly how Elijah's departure will occur or the immediate future but continues to follow faithfully. He knew that Elijah would be taken from him that day but he did not know the exact time or the exact place that the event was going to happen. God might have hidden some events from us, so that we can apply faith.

Faith is shown greatest when one is not aware of the results that his faithful actions will bring him than when one is aware. If you are employed and you know your salary is a fixed amount for

example 10,000 American dollars per month, you won't require much faith to do that work because you will be working knowing that you will receive your pay by the end of the month. However, if you get a job that only offers you payment on commission, you will likely do your best so that you can get a higher pay because there is no fixed salary.

If you are intern, you have to prove yourself so that you can get a full-time job in the organization you are working at without knowing whether they will give you a job or not. You will do your best to get that full time job. When you are making a film or writing a book, you will do your best in that work because you want to make the greatest impact.

Starting and running a business requires one to have great faith in the face of uncertainty. That is why a Christian who runs a business is more likely to get closer to God than an employee who earns a fixed salary. Entrepreneurship has contributed to most of my spiritual growth more than anything else could ever do. Gina Din, the Kenyan Public Relations Guru, said that she started her business with lots of prayer and faith.

Luke 1:18-20 (KJV) – "[18] And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. [19] And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. [20] And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zacharias could not understand how they would get a child since him and his wife were both old. He could not understand how scientifically or logically possible it was as he had never seen old people sire and give birth to children. He was a priest approved by God. This means that he probably knew the story of Abraham and Sarah who had a child when they were both very old. This shows, like many of us he took Biblical stories as merely interesting stories.

From Zacharias words, we can see that he did not believe that the same God who gave Abraham and Sarah a child when they were old and had their reproductive organs dead, could do the same to them. Therefore, he doubted the Word of God. As a result, the angel made him dumb. It is dangerous to doubt God's Word.

Hebrews 11:7 (KJV) – "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Water had never fallen on the earth from the sky. God warned Noah that a flood would come. A common saying goes, "seeing is believing." It is hard to understand something that you have never seen. In my Computer Networks classes, I used to find it difficult to understand the concepts because we rarely did practical lessons. Therefore, it involved a lot of imagining and I was not sure whether I was imagining the right thing or not. But by the grace of God, I did well in those classes.

Other people in the world did not believe that rain would fall because they did not understand how that would happen as they had never seen it happen. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3 (KJV), "Through faith we understand." The antediluvians chose to understand first before applying faith. Their choice made them perish as they drowned in the flood waters.

Those who have chosen to understand first before faith never reach the heights that God intended them to reach while some end up perishing. Lack of faith in God is a major reason we have very few truly successful people. People do not believe in God and since they were created in His image it results to them not having self-confidence (what many people term as 'believing in yourself').

As I often say, the Word of God is like a mirror; when you are looking at it, you are looking at God because God and His Word are one (John 1:1). When you spend time with it, you will realize how magnificent, magnanimous, stupendous, fantabulous, and tremendous God is. Like a mirror it will make you realize how magnificent, magnanimous, stupendous, fantabulous, and tremendous God created you. As a result, you will truly believe that you can do all things through Christ, who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13).

Christopher Wallace said, "Stay far from timid, only make moves when your heart's in it and live the phrase, sky's the limit." The best way to stay far from timid is to study and believe God's Word. The more you study and apply it, the more your fears depart. Noah did what God told him to do before he understood how water would fall from the sky. Noah's faith in God in the face of uncertainty, saved him and his family.

Faith often involves trusting God without knowing all the details of what is to come, remaining steadfast even in uncertainty.

Receiving God's Promise

God's Conditional Blessings

2 Kings 2:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." [10] He said, "You have asked for a difficult thing. However, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."

The fulfillment of Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit is conditional on his witnessing Elijah's ascension, which he does. Thus, evidencing that God honors sincere and faithful requests. Numbers 23:19 (KJV) – "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

God cannot lie. Therefore, His promises are sure. Some of His blessings are unconditional. For example, the parents He has given you, siblings, and the residential area that you were born in. You did not get to choose them, neither did you give God anything for Him to give you all that. However, some of His promises are conditional and for you to get them, you must fulfill the required conditions.

Deuteronomy 28:1 (KJV) - "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth."

God promises in Deuteronomy 28:1 that if you diligently hearken to His voice, He will superabundantly bless you. God wants us to obey His commandments because He wants to bless us. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV) - "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 12:13 that keeping God's commandments is the whole duty of man. In other words, we were born to

obey God. If we were born to obey God and the Bible tells us that obedience to God leads to be blessings, it is safe to conclude that we were born to be blessed.

Curses result from sin. When God created Adam and Eve, He made them perfect and upright in character. He gave them everything they needed, not just for their survival but for their flourishing. God provided everything they needed to be happy.

Wealth and riches were in abundance and they were to enjoy an immortal life as God had provided the tree of life for them to eat from. Their home in the Garden of Eden was very beautiful with the most attractive flowers and trees filling the unpolluted air with fresh fragrance.

Eden had the sweetest food that was not yet tainted by sin. Sin made God chase them out of the Garden of Eden. Thus, scarcity that was never known by man was made familiar to man. They were to work to put food on the table and acquire other basic needs like shelter. In their Eden home, God had provided for them food while they worked and a beautiful shelter to live in. They did not have to worry about clothes because they did not know that they were naked. Therefore, their work had a higher purpose since it went beyond the need for providing basic necessities for themselves.

Before sin, God had naturally placed human beings on the highest level of what is commonly known as the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. He had placed them on the self-actualization level. God created labor for their happiness. His will was for them to experience joy in labor and not pain as is the case today. Their mental faculties were also perfect, they did not have to study in difficulty for them to grasp the most technical knowledge. Their memorizing ability and understanding were as high as the heavens are from the earth since God had created them in His image.

The mother was to go through painless birth when giving birth to children. Sin spoilt all these. Sin lowered the mental faculties of human beings. The more one sins, the more their ability to reason, understand and memorize degenerates. Sin made labor painful and caused it to lose its purpose as man was needed to work so hard just to provide the necessities which he previously had in abundance before he sinned. This also tampered with the worship of God.

Most of us worship God so that He can give us what we need or want instead of worshiping Him for who He is. Luke 19:10 (KJV) - "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus died on the cross so that He can restore the blessings which were originally ours. God desires that our work should have a higher purpose than money. He does not like how most

of us work for money. He wants our labor to bring us joy and to be painless as it was in the Garden of Eden. He does not want you to get stressed and feel that your work is a heavy burden.

God wants you to be able to understand the most difficult scientific and mathematical concepts and to memorize them. One may ask, how is this possible? It is difficult for someone who can barely provide basic needs for himself to think of a higher purpose when working. It is difficult for someone who is putting a lot of effort into his work and earning little pay to find happiness in his work. One way that God enables you to have a higher purpose when working and to find happiness in your work is by showing you your purpose in life.

Majority of the people in the world, including many who have high status and high paying jobs, do not know their purpose in life. Therefore, they may be earning high salaries with great benefits, but they are not getting fulfillment in their careers. Deep in their heart of hearts, they feel that something is wrong but they cannot really point out what it is.

Some know their purpose but because they are not so close to God, they do not know the right direction to pursue that purpose. For example, some musicians, knew ever since they were children that they were born to be musicians but since they are not close to God, they sing secular music because they do not have the proper direction to that purpose. Some, their gift might be teaching, but they do not know how to use that calling to bring the greatest good and honor to God and to fellow men. Therefore, they die without having fully fulfilled their purpose.

When you get saved and move closer to God, He will reveal your purpose to you if you do not know it. He will give you the proper direction in pursuing it and He will show you the best way to pursue it that will give the greatest honor to Him and the greatest benefit to men. Thus, you will be happy. You will also acquire great riches and wealth without putting in painstaking effort. Your effort will seem effortless. For example, some of my Christian devotional articles are very long, but I never get tired of writing them.

Sometimes I write as many as 10,000 words a day, but I never feel tired or bored or find it to be too much. As I write, fresh insights from the Holy Spirit keep coming into my mind. Thus, it makes me very excited. I barely get tired of the church service I do. It is quite rare for me to feel that I have done so much for God. I always feel like I can do more because the service I do is in line with my purpose.

As you all know, most church services have no direct pay, but when I do it, I feel fulfilled. Many who undertake it share the same sentiments. They find it to be more fun and exciting than the jobs they are employed and paid a salary to do, especially if they are doing it in accordance with God's will. Church service usually works as a great stress reliever, especially if you are doing it to glorify God.

When you start serving God, it is very difficult to stop. When you obey God by faith before you understand how everything will work out, you will witness the great rewards of your faithful actions. Thus, your understanding will be deepened. When your understanding is enhanced by spiritual things (which are most times very difficult to understand), it will be very easy to grasp any scientific, mathematical and all other knowledge.

For a genuine Christian, schoolwork need not be difficult. For example, it is hard to understand how loving your enemies and forgiving them will work out for your good. However, if you obey that command by faith, you will see how beneficial it is to you. Once you understand something as difficult as that, no science in the world should defeat you.

God wants to increase the blessings that He has already given us. He wants to give us more than we already have. Therefore, He gives a condition to receive those blessings, and that condition is obedience to His commands. The more you obey, the more you get blessed. If you find yourself stagnating at a certain level in life, instead of asking why your prayers are not answered, ask yourself what has God told you to do that you have not yet done then do it.

Spiritual Blessings

John 3:16 (KJV) - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The condition Christ gives us to receive everlasting life is to believe in Him. When you believe in Him, you shall believe He is real, He is the only begotten Son of God, He was sent by the Father to die on the cross, He lived a fully righteous life, and He is risen. If you believe in all that, you shall follow His advice and His guidance.

Disobeying God willingly clearly shows that you do not believe in Him. Obeying God means that you believe in Him. You might be struggling with a certain sin that you are finding hard to stop. Christ wants to see that your heart is fully committed to stop it then He will help you stop. He cannot help you if your heart is not fully committed. Open your heart for Christ to abide in you. As He abides in you, you shall be able to obey His commandments, and you shall have access to the tree of life.

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) - "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Obeying God's commandments is the key that unlocks access to highly secured and the most inaccessible places, the highest one being heaven. That does not mean we are saved by works.

We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we accept Jesus by faith and get saved, He shall enable us to do righteous works. When we live righteously, our vision will be made clear as the stains of sin which previously clogged it will be removed. Thus, our minds will be elevated to a very high level of nobility. When we make it a priority to live righteously, we shall bear good fruits which will in turn bless others and us. 2 Chronicles 20:20 (KJV) – "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper."

Material Blessings

Deuteronomy 8:1 (KJV) - "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers."

Deuteronomy 8 is part of Moses' final address to the Israelites before they enter the Promised Land. In this chapter, Moses emphasizes the importance of remembering the Lord God and His provisions as the Israelites prepare to enter and inhabit the land flowing with milk and honey.

Here God, through Moses, tells the Israelites that if they obey His commandments, He will give them the Promised Land as their possession. Land is something physical. Having faith in God is something spiritual. When you believe in God, you will do what He says. In other words, you will

obey Him. When you obey Him, He will bless you and one of the blessings He will give you are material blessings as He promised the Israelites to give them the Promised Land.

Many Christians believe and have been taught that the only blessings God wants to give them are spiritual blessings and not material blessings. This is an erroneous teaching that has caused so much damage in the church than anyone fathoms. Such teachings have made sin dominate. The people of the world have dominated Christians with their products and services that lead people to sin.

For example, the most popular cartoons, books, music, movies, television shows among other forms of entertainment are secular. This is because they have been widely distributed. Christian entertainment is not widely distributed like secular ones. Therefore, it is not very popular. The same is applicable in every industry.

Many talented men and women who have their products and services widely distributed are not Christians. Some might have started as genuine devoted Christians but along the way, they got caught up with pride and the love of money. For example, the gospel musicians who have switched from singing gospel music to secular music.

The few remaining purportedly genuine Christian talented men and women do not have a desire to acquire a lot of money. Therefore, they do not maximize the quality of their products and services. Those who focus on the quality rarely distribute it widely. This is because their ambition is not to make money and because they do not want to make much of it, they do the bare minimum to make enough to feed themselves and their families.

It is okay and understandable for them not to want much money. However, God intends His children to serve as many people as possible (Mark 9:35). When you serve as many people as possible with your products and services, you will automatically get money. If you do not want that much money, you can use it for charitable purposes while you remain with the little that you want.

For example, some world billionaire entrepreneurs give as much as 99% of their earnings because they do not want much. They use their generosity to fund ungodly agendas that work to bring more harm to the world. Some of them use their money to fund LGBTQIA movements and organizations. Thus, the world perishes because of lack of sufficient Biblical knowledge among Christians. If we

had genuine Bible believing Christian billionaires who used their money to fund the gospel the way secular people do, the world would be very close to heaven.

Failing to serve as many people as God has commanded you to because you do not want a lot of money, may seem good but you are doing God and those you have been called to serve injustice. Not only is it unjust, but it is also immoral. Many people might not realize it, but it is as immoral as committing adultery or breaking any of God's commandments.

Sometimes, one might be afraid to serve widely because they fear the challenges that come with it. That fear shows a lack of faith in God, the overcomer of all challenges and the one who tells you that you are more than a conqueror. When I was young (many Sabbath believing Christians can relate to this), I could not wait for Saturday to end so that I could watch television. The television shows I used to watch, and I used to find readily available were not Christian television shows.

Many children born in Sabbath believing homes cannot wait for Saturday to end so that they can watch their favorite cartoons, movies, or play their favorite video games. The people of the world have really dominated us in that even the little available Christian entertainment has been tainted by the twisting of scripture. For example, a Christian movie or cartoon may have a very good Christian message but shows people working on Saturday and keeping the Sabbath on Sunday which is Biblically wrong. It may have a good message but may show gays and lesbians getting married and doing a church wedding that an ordained pastor or priest officiates.

As Christians, we need to dominate everything that God has called us to (Genesis 1:28). We need to have Christians in the fashion business owning clothing lines that spread God's message. We need to have Christians in the technology space that have developed apps and technology products that uplift Truth. We need to have Christians owning supermarkets and other businesses that have their businesses closed on Saturday/Sabbath (as is the case in Israel).

If we had more Christian schools, that have quality education, students will be more intelligent and wiser than they are now. Imagine a home where a child is learning the Bible from watching Christian cartoons and playing Christian video games. Instead of waiting for the Sabbath to end, they enjoy keeping it because there are items in their homes that make the Sabbath a delight.

However, that is not widely the case. Most children and young people usually say that they will be committed to God when they grow old. Their minds have been wired to falsely believe that Christianity is for old people. This might be because good Christian books do not have beautifully illustrated images that appeal to their minds. Some of those books do not have simple English that makes it easy for them to understand. This might also be on Sabbath and other days; they are forced to listen to sermons with their parents that they barely understand. Therefore, they end up thinking of Christianity as something boring.

One reason sermons may seem boring might be because the listener is not fully converted and is not able to grasp spiritual truth or the listener does not have a tolerance for Godly talks. Other reasons might be: the preacher is not filled with the Holy Ghost, the preacher has not taken sufficient time to study and understand the subject or the Bible text they are preaching from, the preacher does not understand the audience he is speaking to properly, the preacher does not fully believe in what he is preaching. Therefore, he might be speaking loudly but lacking authority (as was the case with the scribes, Matthew 7:29).

For many years, I used to go to church and come out almost the same way as I left. This is because I rarely understood sermons. The first preacher to speak a sermon that I understood was Pastor Errol Nermbhard from South Africa in a camp meeting series at the Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church where he was a guest speaker. I was around 11 years old at the time. From that time, it took a long time before I understood another sermon until I came across sermons by Pastor Randy Skeete on YouTube when I was around 23 years old.

Many young people in church do not reach the age of twenty-three before the world grasps them and makes them sink into the deep miry clay of sin from which they have no hope of return. Parents are to train children from an early age to grasp the truth. Besides that, people who have dedicated themselves to serve God should come up with ideas that are appealing to these young minds and distribute them widely. This will make the young ones educated, motivated, inspired, entertained, and transformed. We do ourselves great harm by not serving as many people as possible as God has told us to.

God has told us in Matthew 28:19 to go out there and teach all nations. Not all teachers have to speak. Some can write books. Some can draw. Some can paint. Some can play musical instruments. There are so many ways to teach than we know.

The Greek word for "teach" in Matthew 28:19 is: μαθητεύσατε (mathēteusate). It comes from the root word μαθητεύω (mathēteuō). This word means "to make disciples" or "to train someone as a disciple." It goes beyond simply imparting knowledge and emphasizes guiding someone to follow and live according to the teachings of the master (in this case, Jesus). The idea is to foster a life-changing relationship and not just classroom-style teaching.

When teaching, do your best to ensure that the least intelligent student understands. Spiritual lessons are not easily understood by carnal minds. As teachers of the Gospel, we should do the best in our ability to make people understand. We are called to teach all nations without discrimination. When you are confining yourself to a local audience in whatever God has commanded you to do, you are practicing discrimination. Serve as many people as you can.

God wants to give us both spiritual and material blessings because we live in a world that is both spiritual and material. Obedience to God leads to spiritual and material blessings. When you follow God’s guidance as your ultimate Shepherd, He will lead you besides the green pastures and the still waters (Psalm 23:2).

God is the Creator of the universe, meaning, He knows where all good things are. Therefore, His leading will take you to the best of the green pastures and the best of still waters because a father’s desire is to give the best gifts to His children. God delights in giving us material blessings, but He does not want us to put our focus on them and neglect our spiritual lives. He does not want us to have so much attachment to them that we end up losing attachment with Him.

I do not understand how possible it is for one to be spiritually wealthy and fail to be materially wealthy unless one does not want. People give the example of Jesus, but 2 Corinthians 8:9 tells us that Jesus was rich but was made poor for our sake, that we through His poverty might be rich. When Jesus entered the boat and spent some time with His disciples, they were able to catch fish that almost sank the boat. Those are material blessings.

Before inviting Jesus, the disciples had worked so hard the whole day and had failed to catch fish. The light that God uses to counter darkness is meant to reveal hidden things, including hidden material wealth that we never knew existed. When our minds are filled with that light, we shall have Godly ideas that will bring transformation into people’s lives which in return will end up rewarding us.

When we have light, we shall be able to see solutions to problems that we never knew. Jesus says in John 8:12 (KJV), "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Many people are materially poor because they are walking in darkness. God gives us a condition to acquire more material blessings and that condition is to obey Him.

Speak God's Word

Joshua 1:8 (KJV) - "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

God is commanding us to not allow His words depart from our mouth. That means we should keep speaking it everywhere we go. This defies normal tradition practiced by the majority of Christians. We only talk about God to those whom we know that they know about God. In other places, nobody knows of the religion we are affiliated to.

Muslims talk about their religion everywhere they go. They are not ashamed to wear clothes that symbolize their religion. They are not ashamed to put down a mat and pray in public when their prayer time reaches. They do not shy off from using words from their religion such as mashallah and inshallah without caring whether you know them or not.

We often feel shy to do the same because we are not sure of how the other person will react. We should ask God to give us the courage and the wisdom to evangelize about Him wherever we go. This is because we might be having a message that the person we are meeting needs to hear. God promises that if we preach about Him everywhere we go, meditate on His Word **all the time**, and obey His commandments, He shall make our way prosperous, and we shall have good success.

Isaiah 1:19 (KJV) - "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:"

In Deuteronomy 28:30 (KJV), the Bible says, "Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof." Here we can see people acquiring blessings that are being snatched away from them. How terrible and painful is that! You would rather not get something

than get something and it gets snatched away from you. It is like someone snatching the most delicious food from your mouth while you are still chewing.

When God's blessings are not with you, you can buy land, till it, and God allows plants to grow, then God takes away that land with everything that you have planted and gives it to one of His faithful servants. When God says, He gives His beloved sleep in Psalm 127:2, who do you think is busy working for his beloved children while they sleep? The wicked are the ones who are lacking sleep day and night for the children of God because they have chosen to trust in their efforts more than God.

Psalm 127:2 does not encourage believers to be lazy. Instead, it encourages them to put more effort in tightening their relationship with God more than doing anything else. As believers work diligently for God, they are resting in God because God's yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). God gives us a condition to enjoy the blessings He has given us, to eat the good of the land. That condition is obedience.

The Condition of Delighting in God's Commandments

Psalm 112:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. [2] His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. [3] Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth forever."

Do you delight in obeying God or are you doing it to merely fulfill a requirement?

"The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God." -Christ Object Lessons, Page 97.3, Ellen G. White.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: [14] Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

When you find joy in keeping the Sabbath and all other commandments, God promises that you will ride on the high places of the earth (Isaiah 58:14). He also promises that your seed shall be mighty on the earth. In other words, the blessings will go beyond you to your generations. He promises to give you wealth and riches and spiritual blessings as well (Psalm 112:3). The condition here is delighting in God's commandments.

When God writes His law in our hearts and instills love in our hearts, we shall easily have love for God and for our fellow men. Selfishness shall die and we shall think of God and others first before we think of ourselves. Therefore, obedience to God will not seem like a burden. It will be a delight. Every time when we wake up, we will be looking forward to obeying God even when facing the most trying circumstances.

Psalm 37:4 (KJV) – "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

The Blessings of Tithes and Offerings

Malachi 3:10 (KJV) - "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

God promises to give you blessings beyond your storing capacity and to protect your harvest/finances on condition of returning your tithes and offerings faithfully. Failure to faithfully return one's tithes and offerings is likened to robbing God. The verse says, "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8). A mortal human being cannot rob an immortal omnipotent God. He may attempt to do it, but He cannot do it. One way we rob God is through tithes and offerings.

God does not use the money and the produce on earth, but He wants us to give tithes and offerings so that it can benefit others through supporting the work of the gospel and helping the needy in society. Church operations need money.

Our tithe is like fuel that is needed to drive church operations. Not only do our tithes and offerings help run church operations, but they also help the less fortunate in the community. Failing to return tithes and offerings blocks the windows of heaven from opening and it allows Satan to spoil our harvest. Therefore, one might be earning a lot of money, but the money seems like it is being stored in a pocket filled with holes.

Acts 5:1-11 (KJV) - "[1] But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, [2] And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet. [3] But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? [4] Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. [5] And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. [6] And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. [7] And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. [8] And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. [9] Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. [10] Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. [11] And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

Ananias and Sapphira attempted to rob God by not bringing the full proceeds to church. They might have brought 9% and left 1%, but God demands total obedience. Therefore, they died on the spot.

Other Bible Verses on the Blessings of Obedience

Deuteronomy 5:33 (KJV) - "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

Luke 11:27-28 (AMP) - "[27] Now while Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed (happy, favored by God) is the womb that gave birth to You and the breasts that nursed You!" [28] But He said, "On the contrary, blessed [happy, favored by God] are those who hear the Word of God and continually observe it."

John 14:23 (KJV) - "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

James 1:25 (KJV) - "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

God honors faith-filled prayers and desires that align with His will, rewarding those who obey Him and earnestly seek Him.

Persistence in Following God's Will

2 Kings 2:1-6 (AMP) – "[1] Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. [2] And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. [3] Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]." [4] Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. [5] The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]." [6] Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on."

Elisha's insistence on staying with Elijah despite being told to stay behind reflects a deep understanding of following God's will through his mentor. Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind but Elisha persisted in going with him. Elisha was not being disobedient to Elijah. He was insisting on helping him. Probably Elijah might have seen that it would be burdensome for Elisha to travel that long distance with him, but Elisha persisted in traveling it.

We should persist in doing God's will despite the challenges and setbacks that come our way. Find a way to always serve God because there is always a way to serve God. When serving God, you may encounter opposition from the church leadership that is opposing your efforts to serve God or from any other person. Do not be discouraged. Do not give up. Ask God to help you overcome that opposition. That does not mean you put up a fight with the church leadership because it is not advisable to oppose authority. That means staying strong and looking for alternative ways.

For example, if a church stops you from serving, you can reach out to individual members. When you do that, do not do it with the purpose of creating an opposition side, do it with the purpose of uplifting truth. You can also move to another church of the same denomination. As a result of aggressively sending my Christian devotional articles, I was banned by WhatsApp three times. I did not give up. Instead, I moved to telegram.

Some faithful people in the Bible who persisted in serving God despite being stopped were:

Moses

Exodus 17:4 (KJV) - "And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me."

Moses faced continuous rebellion and grumbling from the Israelites during their journey in the wilderness. Despite this, he continued to lead them according to God's commands. At times, he would get angry as a human being and do things that were against God's will. Despite that, he would get back on track and continue leading them. You may have fallen astray because of the opposition you face from people. Do not allow yourself to fall completely. Rise up, dust your shoes and go on with the journey.

Hosea

Hosea 1:2 (KJV) - "The beginning of the Word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord."

Hosea was commanded by God to marry a woman of ill repute as a symbolic act to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness. He continued his prophetic ministry despite personal and public challenges. God wanted the Prophet Hosea to feel the burden that was on God's shoulders, loving people despite their unfaithfulness to Him. Hosea would have disobeyed God and told God to choose another person to do that work but he faithfully obeyed Him and chose to take up that burden.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 4:7-9 (KJV) - "[7] But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, [8] And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. [9] Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

Nehemiah faced intense opposition and threats from Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites as he led the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. This is a very large group of people conspiring against one man and one nation. Nehemiah, a staunch man of God made a prayer to God. He remained steadfast and continued the work. Nehemiah's story is like that of Jehoshaphat who was attacked by three armies in 2 Chronicles chapter 20. Jehoshaphat made a prayer to God and trusted that God will help them overcome and for sure He did that.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 20:1-2 (KJV) - "[1] Now Pashhur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. [2] Then Pashhur smote

Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord."

Jeremiah was put in stocks by Pashhur, for prophesying against Jerusalem. He continued to proclaim God's message despite this mistreatment.

Daniel

Daniel 6:16 (KJV) - "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."

Daniel's colleagues were jealous of how the King loved Daniel and elevated him. Since they could not find any fault in his work, they decided to find fault in him worshiping the true God. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den for praying to God despite King Darius's decree. God protected him, and he continued to serve faithfully.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Daniel 3:16-18 (KJV) - "[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. [17] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

The king had issued a decree for everyone to worship the golden image which he had set up. He threatened to throw those who did not worship it into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resolved to worship the true God only and refused to worship the image. They were ready to die rather than to worship another god besides God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship the golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. They remained steadfast in their faith, and God delivered them. Sometimes, before He blesses you, God may want to see how steadfast you are in

following Him. This is because He does not want you to misuse the blessing He wants to give you. When we abuse God's blessings, we bring harm to ourselves and to other people. Therefore, God may sometimes allow us to go through trials and tests so that when we receive the blessing, we use it to glorify Him fully.

Amos

Amos 7:12-15 (KJV) - "[12] Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: [13] But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. [14] Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit: [15] And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."

The prophet Amos was confronted by Amaziah, the Bethel priest, who reported his prophecies to King Jeroboam and tried to silence him. Despite the opposition, Amos continued to preach God's Word.

Peter

Acts 12:1-5 (KJV) - "[1] Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. [2] And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. [3] And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) [4] And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. [5] Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

King Herod Agrippa arrested the Apostle Peter with the intention of executing him, just as he had done with James, the brother of John. An angel of the Lord miraculously freed Peter from prison, and he continued to preach. He did not give up despite his life being previously threatened.

Paul

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (KJV) - "[6] For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

When nearing the end of his life, Paul reflected on his enduring faith and continued preaching despite numerous imprisonments and hardships. Paul persisted in serving God despite the numerous challenges he went through. Like Joseph, while in prison, he continued to serve God. One time Paul and Silas sang songs of praise to God that resulted in the opening of the prison doors and the prisoners were set free (Acts 16:25-26). He persisted in serving God till his death. Death alone should be the one to stop you from serving God.

Acts 14:19-20 (KJV) - "[19] And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. [20] Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."

Apostle Paul was stoned by the Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium and was left for dead in Lystra. However, he rose up and continued preaching the gospel in the city and other regions.

Jesus

John 15:18-20 (KJV) - "[18] If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [20] Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also."

Jesus Himself faced intense persecution throughout His ministry, which culminated in His crucifixion. He continually preached about the kingdom of God and righteousness. Jesus was trying to tell the disciples that the world hates them because of Him. He was also telling them,

being hated by the world is not a new experience and if He went through it successfully, they can also go through it successfully.

Faith involves persistent pursuit of the will of God, even when it seems easier to go the opposite direction. Sometimes our faith is tested to prove if we believe in God or not. Persistence in obeying God's Word, no matter the circumstances, proves that.

Recognizing the Presence of God

2 Kings 2:1-6 (AMP) – "[1] Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. [2] And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. [3] Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]." [4] Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. [5] The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]." [6] Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on."

If we knew who God is, we would not want to leave Him. The thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy comes to us in an attractive and flamboyant manner. Tactfully, he flashes before us all he thinks we need to see. Since he knows us well, he is able to get our attention. We blindly go to him only to realize later that he has nothing good to offer and he has left us in a worse state than before.

God does not always flash the good things in our eyes. He keeps calm and still and humbly invites us to go to Him. As you keep on learning about God, you get to realize how amazing He is. He shows you good things moment by moment. As you spend time with Him as He reveals Himself to you. It reaches a point that you do not want to leave Him and you are willing to go through anything just to stay by His side.

That is how men and women of God are. As the glory of God covers them everything about them shines brightly spelling out “The Light of the World.” Their personalities and character portray light. That was the same case with Moses when he came down from the mountain. The Bible says that his face was shining but he did not know that it was shining (Exodus 34:29). Having walked with God faithfully, Elijah displayed the glory of God. His bond with God was so strong that pulled people to him such as Elisha like a magnet.

Elisha walked with Elijah for quite some time and truly felt that God’s presence was with Elijah and he did not want to leave him. When God is with you, many people will be pulled to you. They will want to stick by you. This is because as a child of God, you are a blessing. Laban noticed that despite his idol worship, God had blessed him because of his son-in-law Jacob. This is evidenced in Genesis 30:27, where Laban acknowledges, "The Lord has blessed me because of you."

Similarly, Potiphar observed God's favor upon him because of the foreign slave Joseph, despite Potiphar's lack of belief. This aligns with Genesis 39:3 (KJV), where it is noted that "And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

Therefore, Elisha was determined to stay by Elijah. He did not want to miss any blessing that might come from spending every second with Elijah. Elisha's determination to stay with Elijah signifies his recognition of God's presence and work through Elijah.

Faithfulness in Small Things Leads to Greater Responsibility

Luke 16:10 (ESV) - "The one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and the one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much."

God tests you with a little and closely watches how you handle it. It is like feeding a child whom you are not familiar with. First you put a little food on the spoon to see if they will be able to chew it and how long they will take to chew and swallow the food on the spoon. You cannot put a lot of food in their mouth because you do not know if they will be able to chew it.

We may think God does not love us because He has not given us as many possessions as our neighbors. He loves us, and wants to give us more, but He is waiting to see how we will first handle what He has already given us. Many ungrateful Christians barely see what God has given them. They are expecting God to throw to them something big at once to know that indeed He has blessed them. They neglect the marvelous things they have around them and because they are not closely connected to God, they do not see how they can use the things they have to get to the next level.

The environment that God has placed you in, is a blessing, ask God to show you how. The physical abilities God has given you are a blessing, ask Him to show you how. The mind God has given you is a blessing, ask God to show you how you can use it. The talents and skills God has given you are a blessing, ask God to show you the best direction to use them. The people around you and the people you meet every day are a blessing, ask God to reveal to you how. You do not need a lot of money to be successful because you are already valuable. God has placed priceless gifts inside you and around you.

How faithful are you in that which is least?

Matthew 25:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. [30] And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The phrase "Not faithful" does not always mean misusing what you have been given. It can mean not using what you have been given. The third servant was not faithful with the one gift he was given. He went and buried it in the ground. In other words, he did not use it. If the master wanted the talents to be kept safe, he would have done that. However, since he wanted the talents to be used, he gave them to three human beings to use.

The third servant was given the least number of talents among the three servants. He was given one talent. One talent in the Bible was about thirty-four kilograms of gold which amounts to around 2.4 million dollars of gold at the current price rate of gold. The third servant gave the master a lame excuse by saying that he was afraid to risk using it.

The master gave him the simplest solution which the servant probably knew. He told him that he would have taken it to be stored in a place where it would gain interest if he did not want to take

big risks. God is telling us the same thing about our talents. He is telling us, if we fear pursuing a music career with our singing talents, we can join the church choir.

God is telling us, if we do not have money to publish a book, we can write devotional articles, host them on free platforms and send them to people. We are to put that which we have to its maximum use. To reach the next level, we must maximize the current level.

Prophet Elisha's faithfulness in following Elijah in smaller tasks prepared him for the larger task of being Elijah's successor.

Faithfulness in small, everyday acts of obedience often prepares us for greater responsibilities and blessings.

God's Assurance and Presence in Transitions

2 Kings 2:6-8 (KJV) – "[6] Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. [7] Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood [to watch] at a distance; and the two of them stood by the Jordan. [8] And Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the waters, and they were divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground."

Elijah's miraculous parting of the Jordan River reassured Elisha of God's power and presence as he steps into his new role. We often forget the wonderful things in the past that God has done for us. In the Sabbath commandment, Exodus 20:8, it starts with the word "remember". As we remember the Sabbath day, we are called to remember that God is the Creator. Creating us and creating the entire universe is a tremendous thing. The Sabbath is a tremendous day too. Therefore, it is important to remember all the tremendous things that God has done in our lives.

God understands how human beings forget easily. Therefore, He keeps on bringing fresh experiences to keep our memories in check. He knew that Elisha had witnessed Elijah do mighty works by God's power. However, He still gave Elijah the power to part the Jordan River before Elijah left Elisha and just before Elisha started his ministry. Elisha's ministry was going to have challenges ahead. Therefore, he had to be reminded of God's power. He was to believe that the

same God who parted the Jordan River at the beginning of his ministry was the same God who was going to help him overcome all those challenges.

A similar event had happened in the time of Moses when the Israelites were traveling from Egypt. Moses parted the Red Sea, and they crossed. Therefore, they saw God's power at work during their transition. That action was to give them faith to continue with their journey. God being good, did not stop doing his mighty works there. He continued doing miracles for them in the wilderness but unfortunately they kept on disobeying Him.

Elisha was marveled by that miracle. That might be why he asked Elijah to give him a double portion of his spirit. After Elijah was taken to heaven, Elisha took over and because he had witnessed that miracle just before he started his ministry, he took over his prophetic role with power.

In times of transition, faith assures us of God's continued power and presence, guiding us through new phases of our journey.

Public Affirmation of Calling

2 Kings 2:9-15 (AMP) – "[9] And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." [10] He said, "You have asked for a difficult thing. *However,* if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." [11] As they continued along and talked, behold, a chariot of fire with horses of fire [appeared suddenly and] separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. [12] Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" And he no longer saw Elijah. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces [in grief]. [13] He picked up the mantle of Elijah that fell off him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. [14] He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he too had struck the waters, they divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over. [15] When the sons of the prophets who were [watching] opposite at Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed down to the ground before him [in respect]."

The presence of the sons of the prophets and the happening of the miraculous events serve as a public affirmation of Elisha's calling and God's endorsement.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (KJV) - "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

God does not delight in darkness; He delights in light. God does not delight in confusion; He delights in clarity. God does not delight in ignorance; He delights in knowledge. God does not delight in foolishness; He delights in wisdom. God does not delight in haphazardness; He delights in planning and organizing. Therefore, when God sends a prophet, He makes it clear to people that the person sent is indeed a prophet. He had to make it clear to people such as the sons of the prophets concerning the ministry of Elisha.

Various people in the Bible were anointed publicly such as:

King Saul: King Saul was anointed by Prophet Samuel as the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1).

1 Samuel 10:1 (KJV) – "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?"

King David: King David was anointed by Prophet Samuel while he was still a shepherd, marking him as the future king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12-13).

1 Samuel 16:12-13 (KJV) – "[12] And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. [13] Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."

King Solomon: King Solomon was anointed publicly and proclaimed king after the death of his father, David (1 Kings 1:39).

1 Kings 1:39 (KJV) - "And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save King Solomon."

Jehu: Jehu was anointed by a prophet on behalf of God to be king over Israel and to execute judgment on the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:6-10).

2 Kings 9:5-10 (KJV) – "[5] And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain. [6] And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. [7] And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. [8] For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel: [9] And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: [10] And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled."

Cyrus: Though not an Israelite, Cyrus, the Persian king, is mentioned as anointed by God to subdue nations and to release the Jewish captives (Isaiah 45:1).

Isaiah 45:1 (KJV) - "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;"

Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ was anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit during His baptism by John the Baptist, marking the beginning of His public ministry (Matthew 3:16-17).

Matthew 3:16-17 (KJV) – "[16] And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: [17] And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Our calling is meant to benefit others. Therefore, we should use it publicly, where God's work in us is recognized by others. We should know that not everyone will validate it. However, that should not stop us from doing God's work.

Humble Recognition of One's Needs

2 Kings 2:9-10 (KJV) - "[9] And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." [10] He said, "You have asked for a difficult thing. However, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."

Elisha's request for a double portion reflects a humble recognition of the immense task ahead and his need for God's empowerment. Elisha sought the power of God before he embarked on his task because he knew that the task ahead of him is not easy. Many people put a lot of effort first before seeking God. They seek God when they encounter difficulties along the journey or when their efforts prove to be fruitless. Therefore, they spend many years of their lives struggling.

We should put God first, last, and best. We should seek Him first before we do anything. We should seek Him last after we have finished doing everything successfully and we should have Him as our best option. We usually seek the advice of family members and friends or even mentors from the internet before we seek God's advice. Doing that is highly erroneous.

One may give you a strategy that worked for him but will not work for you. If you want to start a business, invest, start a family, you should seek God's opinion first. A business idea that has worked for someone else may not work for you because it might not be God's will for your life. A child upbringing strategy and a marriage strategy may work in another home but may not work in your home because people are different and the dynamics that are involved are different.

Another problem is that nobody in this world, including those closest to you, understand you like God does. We should pray fervently and study God's Word to find out if what we want to do is God's will or not. Secondly, we should ask Him to give us the proper direction when doing it and after we succeed, we must go back to thank Him.

1 Kings 3:5-14 (KJ21) – "[5] In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I shall give thee." [6] And Solomon said, "Thou hast shown unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with Thee; and Thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. [7] And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father. And I am but a little child; I know not how to go out

or come in. [8] And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people whom Thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. [9] Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" [10] And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. [11] And God said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment, [12] behold, I have done according to thy words. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. [13] And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. [14] And if thou wilt walk in My ways to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

Solomon did not lean on his own understanding when he was made king. His father David might have advised him on how to go about leadership, but he did not view that advice as fully sufficient because he knew the situations he may face in his leadership would not be exactly the same as the ones David faced. Advice from parents is great but advice from God goes beyond.

Through their great experience, parents and elderly people may offer you profound advice but do not rely on that alone. Sometimes they may give you advice that sounds good but is ungodly, the way Jacob's mother told him to deceive his father to get the blessing. This is because human beings are imperfect. Secondly, they might be experienced but they are not experienced as God whose experience reigns from everlasting to everlasting. Solomon asked God for wisdom and understanding and God was pleased with that so much. He was pleased because He saw that Solomon has humbly recognized his inadequacy.

2 Chronicles 20:5-12 (KJV) – "[5] And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, [6] and said, "O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? And rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? [7] Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever? [8] And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, [9] 'If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence,

or famine, we stand before this house and in Thy presence (for Thy name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help.' [10] And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them not" [11] behold, I say, how they reward us by coming to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit. [12] O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

God was pleased too with King Jehoshaphat because of his humility in acknowledging that they had no strength over the great company that came against them. They acknowledged that not only do they lack might but they also lack knowledge of how to deal with them. Jehoshaphat concluded the prayer by saying that their eyes were upon God. In other words, their focus and their hope was on God, the omnipotent One.

Faith in God includes humbly acknowledging our need for God's help and empowerment to fulfill the tasks He sets before us.

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Healing the Water of Jericho

2 Kings 2:19-22 (AMP) – “[19] Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Look, this city is in a pleasant place, as my lord [Elisha] sees; but the water is bad and the land is barren.” [20] He said, “Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him. [21] Then Elisha went to the spring of water and threw the salt in it and said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘I [not the salt] have purified *and* healed these waters; there shall no longer be death or barrenness because of it.’” [22] So the waters have been purified to this day, in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha.”

Confidence in God's Power

By faith, Elisha confidently addressed the challenge brought to him by the people of the city. They pointed out the bad water and barren land, but Elisha's response showed his trust in God's ability to perform miracles. He did not doubt the power of God. The men of the city said, “Look, this city is in a pleasant place, as my lord [Elisha] sees; but the water is bad and the land is barren. (2 Kings 2:19)” The men of the city saw the bad water and the barren land.

Elisha saw that the city was in a pleasant place. When you are a person of God, you will view situations differently from people of the world. You will see the positive inside the negative. You will see great solutions in the midst of the greatest problems. As a man of God, Elisha sees beyond the obvious. He sees the good in a bad place. He sees hope in hopelessness. He sees what is to be rather than what currently is.

Faith in God enables one to see things that way. God changed Abram’s name to Abraham. The name Abraham means “Father of many” or “Father of a multitude.” In other words, God gave Abraham that name before he had children.

Like Elisha, a Godly person realizes that everything God created is good and has tremendous value. How does he or she know this? Genesis 1:31 (KJV) - "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

On the last day of creation, God looked at everything that He had made. Evaluating His creation, He saw that everything He had made was very good. What He had created was excellent and perfect. Sin tainted God’s creation. Therefore, bringing problems everywhere like bad water and barren land as was the case with Jericho.

Luke 19:10 (KJV) - "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The work of salvation aims to restore all that was lost as a result of sin. Through the power of God, Elijah was used to heal the waters and restore the barren land. Contrary to many real estate experts and agriculturalists' belief, one does not need to buy land in affluent or fertile areas for that land to be profitable to them. One can buy land anywhere and dedicate it to God and God will bring immense value to it. The value of land and the value of anything is spiritual and rarely physical.

Most bank notes are made from the same material, using the same method, but one is more valuable than the other, that is spiritual. Two similar portraits or works of art can be priced differently, one may be priced higher than the other because of the value of the person who drew it or its significant story, that is spiritual. Some places have land that is very fertile but at the same time very cheap. There might be physical factors that might have caused the land to be affordable but if you trace closely, you will realize the reason behind its value is spiritual.

When a well-known billionaire purchases land in a certain deserted and dilapidated area and builds a house there, the value of that land will go up. If other billionaires come to the same place and build their homes, the value will rise significantly. That shows the spirituality behind the value of things.

Famous Kenyan YouTuber Fredrick Marwa by building a house in his village Nyabohanse village, has caused a lot of worldwide attention to that village. Through that, he has made people from all over the world want to live in that village. Many people from various countries have visited that village wanting to build their homes there. As a result, the price of land in that village will surge.

Spirituality is reality. You do not need to buy land in the best place for it to be profitable. One can buy land anywhere and dedicate it to God and God will bring immense value to it. God is the one who created everything, He knows and understands the value of everything. God gave the dust of the ground which is stepped upon value by creating man.

A Tremendous Asset

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) - "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

God healed the water and the land through His servant Elisha. This shows that a genuine follower of Christ is a tremendous asset. Assets are not just the things which business and investment experts acknowledge. Business and investment experts acknowledge the following as assets: Land, houses, businesses, intellectual property, crypto currency, precious metals, and stones etc.

Someone who understands God and His Word deeply will tell you that these are in fact the lowest forms of assets.

What are the greatest assets then? The greatest assets are spiritual assets. Our God-given gifts and abilities, the fruit of the Holy Spirit in us, our connection with God, the knowledge, understanding, memorizing and application of God's Word are assets. Therefore, a man of God is an asset. This is because through God's power, like Elisha, he is able to add value to what previously had no value.

Time spent with God and money spent to further the gospel is an investment. Eating healthy and following all the health rules is an investment. Using your talents to glorify God is also an investment. You will rarely find such knowledge in the best world business books. A Christian with such knowledge, should be extremely ahead in life.

By requesting a new jar and salt, Elisha engaged in a symbolic act of faith. Matthew 5:13 (KJV) - "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." In Matthew 5:13, salt signifies the addition of flavor to enhance the taste of something. As Disciples of Christ, we ought to add flavor to the world. Therefore, when Elisha poured the salt into the water, he was symbolically adding flavor to that water.

The salt itself had no inherent power in itself to purify the water, but it served as a tangible demonstration of faith. Elisha used the physical act as a conduit for God's power, highlighting that it was God's intervention, not the salt that would bring about healing.

Proclamation of God's Word

When Elisha poured the salt into the water, he proclaimed, "Thus says the Lord: 'I [not the salt] have purified and healed these waters; there shall no longer be death or barrenness because of it. (2 Kings 2:21)'" This declaration underscored his faith in God's direct involvement and his role as a prophet speaking God's Word. Elisha attributed the miracle entirely to the Lord God, making it clear that the purification was an act of divine power.

We love being praised because praises feel good. Elisha did not seek his praise first; he sought God's praise. He wanted the people to praise God and not him. The 48 Laws of Power Book says, "Get Others to Do the Work for You, but Always Take the Credit." Many of us apply this principle. We love taking the credit even for work that we have not done. This is because we want people to have a higher perspective of us.

What we do not know is that we are wonderfully and fearfully created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 139:14). Satan played with Eve's self-esteem by promising her to be like gods if she ate the fruit. Eve believed that lie, not knowing that she was created in the image of the Most High God.

Since we want to appear accomplished in the eyes of men, we are selfish with our credits. Therefore, when someone tells us something good, we feel so good and as a result we feel that it is too much to give God the glory.

Love for self is so saturated inside us that words of acknowledging others barely come out of our mouths. People rarely give each other compliments. Elisha was given tremendous power from God which led him to do mighty works. It is only until we die completely to self that we will be able to do powerful works that will glorify God and bless the world.

Acts 12:21-23 (NIV) - "[21] On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. [22] They shouted, 'This is the voice of a god, not of a man.' [23] Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died."

An angel of the Lord killed Herod instantly because he took all the glory to himself and failed to give glory to God. Not giving glory to God is a severe offense. It is similar to what Satan did when he said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High (Isaiah 14:13-14, KJV)."

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (KJV) – "[17] And thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. [18] But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."

The Bible says that we should not think that we have obtained the wealth that we have through our hard work. It is quite common to hear people attributing the good things they have gotten in life to their own efforts and intelligence. Unknown to many, this is a grievous error.

If we are intelligent, we should know that it is God who created us and who enabled us to have the brains that we have. If we are physically strong, we should acknowledge that it is God who gave us that physical strength. If we are healthy, we should know that it is God who made us healthy. If we are disciplined and we are able to do something to completion, we should know that it is God who has given us that level of discipline. If some good-looking people truly believed that it is God who created them, they wouldn't be proud the way they are.

Commenting on Deuteronomy 8:17-18, Myron Golden says, "You saw something and then you did something about what you saw. You know how to make yourself look but you do not know how to make yourself see, so God gave you the power to see the thing that you looked at. You know how to make yourself walk but you do not know how to make your legs work, so God gave you the power to do the walking. You know how to hold something but you don't know how to make your hands hold."

Let us learn to be like Elisha and not like Herod. Let us learn to give God praise in all our accomplishments.

Immediate and Lasting Results

The Bible says, "So the waters have been purified to this day, in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha. (2 Kings 2:22 AMP)." God's miracles are long lasting. The Devil can also do miracles but his miracles do not last long because his work is to kill, steal and destroy. His job is to take away and not to add.

The immediate and lasting purification of the water, "in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha," affirmed Prophet Elisha's faith. The outcome demonstrated that his trust in God's Word was justified, and it served as a testament to the people of the city's faith in God's power working through His faithful prophet.

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Cursing the Mocking Boys

2 Kings 2:23-25 (AMP) – "[23] Then Elisha went up from Jericho to Bethel. On the way, young boys came out of the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" [24] When he turned around and looked at them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore to pieces forty-two of the boys. [25] Elisha went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria."

Elisha’s name means "God is salvation." Elisha’s name emphasizes his role as a prophet through whom God’s saving power and authority are demonstrated. His cursing of the boys and the subsequent event illustrate the seriousness of disrespecting God’s appointed servant, thereby emphasizing divine authority and judgment.

Jericho means "City of palms" or "fragrance." Jericho, known for its strategic and fertile location, represents a place of new beginnings. Elisha’s journey from Jericho to Bethel symbolizes a transition in his ministry and the establishment of his authority as a prophet after Elijah.

Bethel means "House of God." Bethel holds historical and religious significance as a place of worship and divine encounters. The contrast between its name ("House of God") and the behavior of the mocking boys highlights the moral and spiritual decline in the area. It underscores the need for divine judgment and correction.

Mount Carmel means "Garden" or "vineyard of God." Mount Carmel is a place associated with God’s power and past victories (e.g., Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal). Elisha’s journey to Mount Carmel symbolizes the continuation of Elijah’s prophetic ministry and his alignment with God’s power and authority.

Samaria means "watch mountain" or "watchtower." Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, represented the political and religious center. Elisha’s return to Samaria signifies his active role in the nation’s prophetic and political affairs, maintaining his influence and authority as a prophet of God.

The Ultimate Weapon

When mocked by some boys on the way from Jericho to Bethel, Elisha cursed them, and two bears came out of the woods and devoured the boys. The boys were mocking Elisha repeatedly. They were forty-two in number, young and energetic and he was probably old. Therefore, he had no ability to defeat them physically. When you are with God, you need no weapon. Faith in God should be the ultimate weapon for every Christian. As a human being, Elisha was angry. He knew if he let them be, they would probably continue with the mocking. God is a God of mercy but He is also a God of judgment.

The boys were probably used to doing that to other people. The boys might have even done that to Elisha previously. They might have even been warned but they chose not to listen. As most of us will attest, the first time we do something evil, nothing significant usually happens. Therefore, pride gets cultivated in our hearts and we continue doing the same evil thing. It is when we get punished that we come to our senses and start feeling that we would want to stop that evil action that we are doing.

Elisha's Faith and God's Justice

God's punishment always works in our favor and for our favor. Being in Israel, the boys had probably learned or heard God's Word. They were probably taught to respect their elders but had chosen not to listen. Elisha, being a servant of God was instructed by the Spirit of God to curse those boys.

It might not have been explicitly written in the Bible that God's Spirit instructed him to do that action but the fact that the curse fell upon those boys immediately, it shows that God's power was at work in punishing those boys. John 15:7 (KJV) - "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." The Bible says if you abide in God and His words abide in you, your requests to God will be fulfilled.

God's Word lived inside Elisha. Therefore, when he cursed those boys, a bear came and mauled them because it was God's will. If it was God's, will it means that God's Spirit had instructed him to do so. Some of our thoughts and imaginations are inspired by the Holy Spirit, especially if we are men and women who walk faithfully with God. When God's words abide in us, we are able to know what God's will is and our prayers are closely aligned with His will. Therefore, we will experience continuous answered prayers.

Elisha's response to the mocking boys shows his unwavering belief in God's authority and justice. By cursing the boys in God's name, Elisha displayed his confidence that God would uphold his honor and respond appropriately to the disrespect shown to His beloved prophet.

As a prophet, Elisha had a significant role in communicating God's will and upholding God’s divine honor. Elisha's actions reflect his faith in the seriousness of his calling and the necessity of maintaining respect for God's messengers.

Elisha's curse and the subsequent attack by the two female bears demonstrate his belief in God's immediate and sovereign control over all creation. The quick response from the Lord serves as a reminder of God's power and His willingness to intervene directly in human affairs to protect His chosen representatives.

Touch Not God’s anointed

1 Chronicles 16:21-22 (KJV) - "[21] He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproved kings for their sakes, [22] Saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm."

We should not joke with servants of God. Even when they make a mistake, we should approach the situation with humility seeking to bring them closer to God, not to condemn them. In Genesis 20, Abraham lies to Abimelech that Sarah is his sister. Abimelech takes Sarah to wife her. The Bible says that God came to Abimelech at night and told him that he is a dead man. Abraham had lied out of fear but God still fought for Him because God is a God of mercy (He shows mercy to everyone) and Abraham was His chosen servant.

In Genesis 9, Canaan, the son of Noah, received a curse because of laughing at his drunken father’s nakedness. Drinking is sinful as it is destroying God’s temple but Canaan gets cursed because Noah is his father and he ought to honor him and Noah was God’s chosen servant.

This story of Elisha and the forty-two boys illustrates the importance of reverence for God and His appointed leaders. Elisha's reaction can be seen as an act of faith that God's honor should be upheld and that blasphemy or disrespect toward God's servants is a severe offense. The terrible consequence that befell the boys emphasizes the gravity of mocking God’s prophet or God’s servant.

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Providing Water for the Kings

2 Kings 3:9-20 (AMP) – "[9] So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. They made a circuit of seven days' journey, but there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them. [10] Then the king of Israel said, "We are doomed, for the Lord has called these three kings to be handed over to Moab." [11] But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here from whom we may inquire of the Lord?" One of the servants of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water over Elijah's

hands." [12] Jehoshaphat said, "The Word of the Lord is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to Elisha. [13] Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What *business* do you have with me? Go to the prophets of your [wicked] father [Ahab] and to the prophets of your [pagan] mother [Jezebel]." But the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the Lord has called these three kings *together* to be handed over to Moab." [14] Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts (armies) lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you [king of Israel]. [15] But now bring me a musician." And it came about while the musician played, that the hand (power) of the Lord came upon Elisha. [16] He said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Make this valley (the Arabah) full of trenches.' [17] For thus says the Lord, 'You will not see wind or rain, yet that valley will be filled with water, so you and your cattle and your *other* animals may drink. [18] This is but a simple thing in the sight of the Lord; He will also hand over the Moabites to you. [19] You shall strike every fortified city and every choice (principal) city, and cut down every good tree and stop up all sources of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones.'" [20] It happened in the morning, when the sacrifice was offered, that suddenly water came [miraculously] from the area of Edom, and the country was filled with water."

In 2 Kings 3:9-20, Elisha demonstrated his faith in several major ways during the crisis faced by the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom.

Jehoshaphat means "The Lord has judged." As the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat's name signifies divine judgment. His presence in seeking Elisha indicates a desire for divine guidance and judgment in their dire situation. His righteousness contrasts with the wickedness of the king of Israel, bringing favor in Elisha's eyes.

Elisha means "God is salvation." Elisha represents the channel of God's salvation and guidance. His role is pivotal in delivering God's instructions and promise of salvation to the desperate kings. His presence reinforces the theme that true deliverance and judgment come from God.

Shaphat means "He has judged." Elisha being the son of Shaphat, whose name also means judgment, reinforces the notion of divine judgment and deliverance being central themes in this narrative. It underscores Elisha's role as a judge and deliverer in Israel.

Edom means "Red" or "earthy." Edom's landscape is barren and harsh, emphasizing the miraculous provision of water in such an unlikely place. The association with "red" or "earthy" might also point to the bloodshed and struggles that often occurred in this region.

Moab means "From the father." Moab, a historical enemy of Israel, represents opposition and judgment. The Moabites' impending defeat signifies God's judgment against those who oppose His people.

Arabah "Desert" or "wilderness." The Arabah valley, a dry and barren place, symbolizes desolation. The miracle of filling it with water highlights God's power to bring life and sustenance in the most desolate circumstances.

The Best Hang out Buddy

Three kings, the king of Israel, the king of Judah and the king of Edom were afraid that the Moabites might defeat them. King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked if there is a prophet who may ask God what he needs them to do as there was no water for them, their armies and their animals to drink. One of the king's servants said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water over Elijah's hands." This servant recognized that Elisha was once a servant of Elijah. He believed that because Elisha followed Elijah closely, he might have some prophetic power in him. A common saying goes, "you are the average of your five closest friends."

When you walk or stay with someone for a long time, you may find yourself doing things like them and even talking like them. Sometimes when couples stay together for so long, people perceive them to look alike. If you stay in an environment with a certain ethnic group that is not your ethnic group for long, you start looking like them and behaving like them.

Therefore, it is important to be around the people who we would like to be like. If you want to be an aerospace engineer, hang around aerospace engineers. If you want to be a doctor, hang around doctors, if you would like to be a musician, hang around musicians. If you want to be a pastor, hang around pastors. If you want to be like God (or Godly), hang around God.

Hanging around God is the best personal development strategy. When you hang around God, everything about you changes because your whole being gets lifted up. Your knowledge, wisdom

and understanding gets raised. Your abilities get lifted up. Even your physical appearance changes because you get covered with the glory of God just like Moses whose face was shining when he came from communing with God (Exodus 34:29-35).

How do you hang around God and He is invisible? The best way to hang around God is to spend time on His Word. The servant was not wrong when he assumed that Elisha could inquire of God because Elisha had received a double portion of Elijah's spirit and he had spent a good amount of time with God. Since Elisha had walked with God faithfully, he had confidence in the Lord's ability to provide a solution to the dire situation. This reflected his deep faith in God. Despite the critical lack of water, Elisha did not panic. Instead, he trusted that the Mighty God could and would intervene.

Rebuke and Independence

Elisha's initial response to the Israel king shows his integrity and his faithfulness to God. He reminded the king of Israel to seek advice from the false prophets of his parents, Ahab, and Jezebel. He had seen how Ahab and Jezebel had troubled his master, Elijah. It was like he was giving the king of Israel a warning not to follow after the ways of his parents. He was trying to show him the grievousness of his parents' sins, so that he could repent in case there was a generational curse that might befall him.

Elisha only agreed to help out of respect for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, who was more faithful to God. This demonstrated Elisha's commitment to serving the true God rather than pandering to political leaders.

In these modern times, we have pastors and members of the clergy who really bow down to politicians and other men of power. They fear telling them the truth. In case such men and women visit their churches, they are treated like kings and queens with more preference above other members. You will find they are given the best seats to sit on. Many of these churches make God look like He is a respecter of persons, contrary to what is written in the Bible (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11).

Such preferential treatment, even in the church, encourages leaders to continue doing evil. Most times churches treat leaders like that because they are expecting to get money from them. It is good to respect those in authority, but we should not shy off from preaching the truth because of being afraid that they would get hurt. That truth which we are afraid of preaching might be what that person really needed. They may not always get angry as we think they may. If the church would take full responsibility to play its role as it should, God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Seeking God's Guidance Through Worship

Elisha requested for a musician to play, which facilitated a spiritual atmosphere conducive to receiving God's Word. This act of seeking divine guidance through worship indicates Elisha's reliance on God's presence and direction in times of need. It shows his faith in the process of connecting with God to obtain a prophecy.

No matter how powerful one is, God's gifts do not always come like magic. We misunderstand prophets and we usually think of them to be psychics. Therefore, we approach them expecting them to tell us all details concerning our lives immediately. God does not always reveal everything to all prophets. He may reveal some things to one and other things to another.

One reason is because He has many chosen servants and He wants them to collaborate. If He gives everything to one person, that person would feel no need to collaborate. Also, that person may be proud, for it is through lack that many of us are able to humble ourselves. Elisha sought for a Godly musician. He wanted the ministry of a musician because he felt that he had insufficiency in prophesying that particular thing at that moment.

When we are troubled by a matter which we have no interpretation for, we should not run to the internet first or to seek the advice of friends. We should worship God first. Worshipping God pulls us closer to God and we are able to connect with the mind of the Divine. Thus, getting interpretations of the most complex mysteries.

Bold Prophetic Declaration

Elisha made a bold and improbable prophecy that people should dig trenches in the valley and that it would be filled with water without wind or rain. He did not tell them how many trenches to dig. He simply told them to dig trenches. They were to dig as many as they possibly could. The limitless God does not give us a limit to the number of people we should serve. We are the ones who limit ourselves. God encourages us to serve as many people as possible.

God loves it when our work and its influence goes beyond infinity. He did not tell Abraham how many children he should have. The Lord told Abraham that he would be a father of many nations and his descendants will be as innumerable as the stars of the sky.

If the three kings dug a few trenches, they would be doing injustice to themselves and to others. We do injustice to ourselves and to others when we limit ourselves. This prophecy given to them by Elisha was an act of great faith because it involved a miracle that defied natural expectations. Elisha was confident that God would fulfill this promise.

Assurance of Victory

Beyond just providing water, Elisha declared that God would deliver the Moabites into the hands of the three kings. This extended the scope of God's intervention from merely meeting an immediate physical need (water) to granting a strategic military victory. God wants to fulfill your immediate and future needs. Some Christians often think of God as only interested in them going to heaven and not living a successful life on earth.

The reality is life on earth cannot be fully perfect because we are surrounded by sin. However, you will diminish most of the problems you have if not all when you submit yourself fully to God. Secondly, God does not want us to suffer much trouble as a result of following Him. He wants to give us a good life so that people can look at us and be attracted to join His divine kingdom.

God is a God who delights in blessing us not cursing us. We may undergo a few trials and persecution on the way but they are just for a small season. Pastor Randy Skeete says, "There is only one Job in the Bible." He says that to portray that it is quite a rare event for a Christian to

suffer like Job in the Bible did. Elisha’s faith encompassed both provision and triumph. This is because God is a God of provision and He is also a triumphant God.

Fulfillment of the Prophecy

When water miraculously flowed from Edom the next morning, as Elisha had prophesied, it confirmed his faith in God’s Word and his role as the Lord’s prophet. The exact fulfillment of the prophecy reinforced the reliability of God’s promises and Elisha's trust in them.

Elisha’s faith is shown in this passage through his unwavering trust in God’s power and presence and his boldness in delivering God’s message. It is also shown through his dependence on divine guidance, and the remarkable fulfillment of his prophecy. He trusted God to provide a miraculous solution to a desperate situation and acted confidently based on his faith in God.

Multiplying the Widow's Oil

2 Kings 4:1-7 (AMP) - "[1] Now one of the wives *of a man* of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha [for help], saying "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant [reverently] feared the Lord; but the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves [in payment for a loan]." [2] Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have [of value] in the house?" She said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a [small] jar of [olive] oil." [3] Then he said, "Go, borrow containers from all your neighbors, empty containers—

and not *just* a few. [4] Then you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out [the oil you have] into all these containers, and you shall set aside each one when it is full." [5] So she left him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing her *the containers* as she poured [the oil]. [6] When the containers were all full, she said to her son, "Bring me another container." And he said to her, "There is not a one left." Then the oil stopped [multiplying]. [7] Then she came and told the man of God. He said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest."

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, Elisha proved his faith in God through several significant actions and responses to the widow in distress:

Compassion and Concern

When the widow of one of the sons of the prophets approached Elisha, she was facing a grim situation where creditors were coming to take her two sons as slaves in payment for her deceased husband's debts. Elisha immediately demonstrated compassion and willingness to help, showing his faith in God's provision and care for the vulnerable (verse 1). He gave them a warm embrace in the winter of sadness. Caring is a melody that sweetens the silence of sorrow.

James 2:18 (NIV) - "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds."

Faith should be followed by deeds. Deeds prove faith and love. It is good to tell people how much you care for them and how much you love them but sometimes words may not always do much good, especially when someone is need of something physical. This is because many people tend to believe in the phrase, "talk is cheap." One reason they believe in that statement is because some of them are used to people who say words that they barely mean or who make promises that they barely fulfill.

Therefore, kind words to them, may not do much good. Most Christians think they have to be very rich to fulfill the needs of someone. Jesus and His disciples and other powerful people in the Bible like Elijah and Elisha were not very rich but they still helped people with their physical needs.

We can see examples with Jesus feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish borrowed from a boy (meaning he had no food of his own at that time). Peter and John told the lame man that they have no silver and gold but they were able to fulfill the physical need that was troubling that man for a long time. They made him walk.

Many Christians have not developed a close relationship with God. Therefore, they are not able to help much when they do not have resources because they are more inclined in trusting in the material possessions that they have or they don't have instead of trusting in God. Luke 15:31 (NKJV) - "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.'" The father says this to the older son in response to his son's anger and resentment about the celebration for his younger brother's return. The older son feels neglected and unappreciated despite his years of faithful service to his father.

The older son complains because he does not know that all the father's resources are at his disposal. That is one of the greatest tragedies we have as Christians. We are unaware of our heritage. Therefore, because we do not know what we own by virtue of being the children of the Highest God. We live as paupers. We live in fear, having low self-esteem and always complaining.

Matthew 28:18-19 (KJV) - "[18] And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Jesus is telling us that all power is given to Him and for this reason He commands us to go and teach all nations. He is telling us that the power that has been given to Him is essentially given to us when we are carrying out God's purpose (like teaching all nations). Therefore, we should not fear to go for missions to the needy because we have inadequate resources.

All resources that God has are ours and they are at our disposal when we are doing God's work. We should trust Him that He will give them to us if we are doing what is in accordance to His will. Elisha did not use his own resources to provide food for the widow. If he had used his resources, they would not last the widow for long. Instead, Elisha used the power of God and through God's power, the widow was able to pay the debts and make a living for her and her family for a lifetime. God's power goes beyond our resources. If we want to access this power, we should develop

closeness with God. When we do that, the impact we are going to have on people will be tremendous and long lasting.

God’s Guidance to Abundance

Elisha asked the widow what she had in her house. She mentioned that she only possessed a small jar of olive oil. Instead of dismissing this insignificant resource, Elisha instructed her to gather as many empty containers as possible from her neighbors. This action showed Elisha's faith in God's ability to multiply the little that the widow had in abundance. God breathes, speaks, and abides in abundance.

The God who reigns from everlasting to everlasting is naturally abundant. When you seek God for a solution to a problem, He will lead you to use that which you possess, which you think is scarce and provide you with an abundant solution through it. This truth is evident in all living things. We can see this in human beings.

A human being’s body structure goes beyond what you can see. A body is divided into different parts. Those parts have smaller divisions. They are supported by internal organs which also are further divided into smaller microscopic divisions. For example, a human body is made up of approximately 37.2 trillion cells (about 170-180 billion cells are found in the brain).

Each cell is made up of numerous organelles. Each organelle is made up of numerous macromolecules. Each macromolecule is made up of a huge number of molecules. Each molecule is made up of around 10^{14} (100,000,000,000,000 (100 trillion)) to 10^{15} atoms (1,000,000,000,000,000 (1 quadrillion)). Each atom is made up of around 10^{24} (1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (1 septillion)) subatomic particles.

Through our biological structure, we can clearly see that God created abundance in us. Either in real life or in the news, we do not know anyone with a net worth of one hundred trillion leave alone one quadrillion and one septillion.

As of 2022, the Gross Domestic Product of the entire world was around 87.55 trillion (it did not even reach one hundred trillion). Therefore, when we ever underestimate ourselves and when we

think of ourselves as too inadequate, we should think of the abundance that God has placed in us. It is injustice to God and to yourself (who God has created in abundance) to have a scarcity mindset.

God's guidance and instructions are abundant just as God is abundant. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35)." God's solutions are permanent. God's solutions are generational. God's solutions are global (Matthew 28:19). God's solutions are gigantic. God's solutions are found in His Word. Rejecting God's guidance and instruction is rejecting blessings in abundance.

Faith in God's Provision

Elisha told the widow to pour the oil into the containers that she had borrowed, promising that the oil would continue to flow until all the containers were filled. This act required faith from both Elisha and the widow. The widow had to believe that God would multiply the oil beyond its natural limits because He is a supernatural God. The amount of oil gathered was dependent on the number of containers the widow borrowed.

Elisha did not give the widow a specific number of containers to borrow. He just told her to borrow as many as possible. The widow was to decide how many she would borrow. This is similar to when Elisha did not tell the kings how many trenches to dig, they were to dig as many as possible. God is a God of no limitations. As His children, we are to have no limitations when doing that which He has commanded us. In every righteous thing you do, ask yourself, how can you go beyond your limits?

If you are the owner of a legal and moral business ask yourself, how can you go beyond your limits in that business? If you are an employee, ask yourself, how can you go beyond your limits at work? If you serve in church, ask yourself, how you can go beyond your limits in church service. Sometimes (and most times) the blessings we have been praying for are found at the extra mile.

The lady approached a genuine man of God to give her a solution to her problem. Many of us, the last person we approach when we have a problem is a man or woman of God. People in the church approach friends, witches, wizards, sorcerers, magicians etc. It is not bad to approach your friends

but while they give you advice, find out if the advice they are giving you is in accordance with God's Word. Elisha gave the widow a wonderful solution to her problem.

People of God need to provide solutions and not to add salt to injury. The solutions that we ought to provide should point the people to Jesus. The solution that Elisha gave the widow, pointed her to Christ in this way: The strategy she was to apply was a physical strategy but the endless supply of oil out of the little oil she had to fill all the containers required her to trust in God. As people of God, we are blessed with knowledge and understanding that is supernatural. As a result, some people might see that and start worshipping us, instead of worshipping God.

Since we love praises and compliments from our fellow men, we may start feeling comfortable in that praise and from our carnal selfish hearts fail to point the people to God. Therefore, the people end up trusting us more than they trust God. Satan's most effective strategy in getting us into temptations is by diverting our attentions from the Highest God. Normally, he does that by diverting it a little because he knows once he diverts it a little, we will dwell on that distraction and eventually our focus will be completely turned from God.

As the widow and her sons obediently poured the oil into the containers, they witnessed the miraculous multiplication of the oil until all the containers were filled to capacity (verses 5-6). This demonstrated God's faithfulness in providing abundantly beyond their imaginations. Ephesians 3:20 (KJV) - "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

God can do far more than we can ask or even think to ask. God's capabilities are beyond human comprehension. The blessings and interventions from God are beyond adequate; they are abundantly more than we could imagine. The power that enables God to do these things works within believers through the Holy Spirit. This means that God's miraculous works and transformative power are actively present in the lives of those who abide by Him.

Believers are encouraged to trust in God's ability to provide and intervene in ways that surpass their comprehension. When praying, Christians should remember that God can respond in ways that exceed their highest expectations. Recognizing that the power of God is active within us encourages believers to rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance and strength in their daily lives.

Practical Assistance

After the miraculous multiplication of the oil, Elisha instructed the widow to sell the oil, pay off her debts, and live on the surplus. This practical advice showed Elisha's faith in God's ability to not only perform miracles but also to provide sustainable solutions to real-life problems.

Elisha's actions in this passage demonstrated his immediate concern for the widow's plight, his guidance and faith in God's provision, and his practical advice—reflected a deep trust in God's ability to intervene supernaturally in everyday circumstances. His faith was not just theoretical but practical, manifesting in actions that brought tangible relief and blessing to the widow and her family.

Godly spiritual advice is practical advice. People often think of spirituality as some form of far-fetched unseen phenomena. Spirituality manifests in physicality because spirituality is reality.

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The Shunamite Woman Gives Birth

2 Kings 4:8-17 (AMP) – “[8] Now there came a day when Elisha went over to Shunem, where there was a prominent *and* influential woman, and she persuaded him to eat a meal. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he stopped there for a meal. [9] She said to her husband, “Behold, I sense that this is a holy man of God who frequently passes our way. [10] Please, let us make a small, fully-walled upper room [on the housetop] and put a bed there for him, with a table, a chair, and a lampstand. Then whenever he comes to *visit* us, he can turn in there.” [11] One day he came there

and turned in to the upper room and lay down to rest. [12] And he said to Gehazi his servant, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her and she stood before him. [13] Now he said to Gehazi, “Say to her now, ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us; what can I do for you? Would you *like* to be mentioned to the king or to the captain of the army?’” She answered, “I live among my own people [in peace and security and need no special favors].” [14] Later Elisha said, “What then is to be done for her?” Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son and her husband is old.” [15] He said, “Call her.” So Gehazi called her, and she [came and] stood in the doorway. [16] Elisha said, “At this season next year, you will embrace a son.” She said, “No, my lord. O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.” [17] But the woman conceived and gave birth to a son at that season the next year, just as Elisha had said to her.”

In 2 Kings 4:8-17, Elisha demonstrated his faith in God through several key actions.

Significance of Shunem

Shunem was a town located in the territory of Issachar, in the northern part of ancient Israel. It is currently identified with the present-day village of Sulam, situated in the Jezreel Valley, near the Hill of Moreh.

Sulam is an Arab village in Israel. Like many villages in the region, it maintains a blend of traditional and modern lifestyles. The population is primarily Muslim. The village culture reflects a rich history influenced by various periods, including ancient Israelite, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman eras.

The economy of Sulam, like much of the Jezreel Valley, is heavily based on agriculture, benefiting from the fertile land. The village also engages in various other economic activities typical of rural communities in modern Israel.

Historical Context

Besides the Shunamite’s woman story, Shunem also appears in several other biblical accounts, indicating its significance in the region:

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In 1 Samuel 28:4, the Philistines camped at Shunem before the battle of Gilboa against King Saul.

Shunem was also the hometown of the beautiful Abishag, who was brought to King David in his old age to care for him (1 Kings 1:3).

Etymology and Meaning

The name Shunem in Hebrew is שׁוּנֵם (Shūnēm). The exact meaning of the word Shunem is not entirely clear, but it is often interpreted or associated with the concept of "two resting places" or "double resting place." This interpretation stems from possible roots in the Hebrew language that suggest a place of dwelling or rest.

Here is a breakdown of possible meanings:

Resting Place:

One interpretation is that Shunem means "double resting place" or simply "resting place." This could be derived from the Hebrew root שׁוּן (shūn), which means "to rest" or "to settle." This is fitting given the context in which the Shunammite woman provides a place of rest for Elisha.

Two Camps:

Another interpretation could be "two camps" or "two resting places." This is less common but can be inferred from the potential doubling aspect in the name, suggesting a place significant enough to have multiple areas of rest or significance.

In the biblical narrative, Shunem's meaning as a resting place aligns with the story of the Shunammite woman who provides hospitality to the prophet Elisha. Her home becomes a place of rest for the man of God, reinforcing the implication of the name.

When Your Gift Makes a Room

Elisha frequently passed through the town of Shunem. In Shunem, there was a prominent and influential woman who recognized him as a holy man of God. The Shunamite woman and her husband extended hospitality by inviting him for meals and eventually built a special upper room for him (verses 8-10). Elisha accepted this hospitality graciously, which shows his trust in God's provision through the kindness of other people.

The Bible describes the woman as prominent and influential. Proverbs 18:16 (KJV) - "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." We can see Proverbs 18:16 being evidenced in Elisha's life where his prophetic gift literally makes room for him in the Shunamite woman's house. Using his prophetic gift to uplift truth makes him favorable in the eyes of a prominent and influential person.

Proverbs 22:29 (KJV) - "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

When a person uses their gift diligently for the glory of God, they will stand before great men and women in society. They will stand before kings. We have endless examples of people in the Bible who have stood before kings as a result of using their gifts. Some of these people are: Elisha, Elijah, Joseph, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego among many righteous others.

Appreciating Hospitality

Matthew 10:40-41 (KJ21) - "[40] He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. [41] He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

When you receive a servant of God in your house joyfully, you have received God Himself. Elijah and Elisha proved that. Elisha showed faith by appreciating the woman's generosity and sought to bless her in return. Therefore, he asked his servant Gehazi to ask the Shunamite woman what she desires to have. Elisha acknowledged that what the woman has gone through by feeding them and giving them a place to live in is a lot. He acknowledged that it was quite a burden for her.

A man of God should never be entitled. He should acknowledge any small act of kindness done to him or her. Unfortunately, many people including Christians are inclined to feel entitled. Someone may have done you an act of kindness, but you feel entitled to that person to always be doing you acts of kindness. Elisha took it as a burden upon himself to repay the woman for the kindness shown to him.

A genuine Christian should do his best to leave nothing good done to him unrepaid. If you have benefitted from a certain school that you attended, make sure you give back to that school. If someone has done something good for you, look for a way to do something for them that is better than what they did for you.

As a child of God, you always have better gifts to give than the ones given to you. Give people those gifts. Through Gehazi, Elisha asked the Shunamite woman if she would like to be mentioned to the king or the captain of the army. The woman responded and said that she lives among her people in peace and security and she needs no special favors.

The Spirit of God was in Elisha's heart making him feel that it was necessary to reward that woman. God leaves no faithful person unrewarded. Most times He rewards people through other people. He often does this by troubling the hearts of certain people in society to favor you greatly.

Being a man of God, Elisha consulted Gehazi on what should be done to that woman. Gehazi came back and told Elisha that the woman had no son and her husband was old. Elisha prophesied to her and told her that at the same season (they were in at that moment) the following year, she would give birth to a son.

Faith in God's Promise

Elisha, understanding the woman's unspoken desire for a child, prophesied that she would have a son within a year. Initially, the woman expressed disbelief in that promise, fearing that such a promise might not come to pass. Despite her doubts, Elisha assured her of God's faithfulness.

Fulfillment of the Promise

True to Elisha's prophecy, the woman conceived and bore a son the following year, exactly as Elisha had prophesied. This miraculous birth not only brought joy to the woman and her husband but also affirmed Elisha's role as a true prophet of God. The fulfillment of Elisha’s prophecy demonstrated his unwavering faith in God's ability to fulfill His promises.

Elisha's faith in this story is evident in his acceptance of hospitality, his discernment of the woman's unspoken desire, his bold prophecy despite initial disbelief, and the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. His actions and words reflect a deep trust in God's sovereignty and ability to bring about miraculous events according to His will. This particular story is another evidence that God fulfills promises.

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Raising the Shunammite's Woman Son

2 Kings 4:18-37 (AMP) – "[18] When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father, to the reapers. [19] But he said to his father, "My head, my head." The man said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." [20] When he had carried and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and *then* he died. [21] She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* [of the small upper room] behind him and left. [22] Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I may run to the man of

God and return." [23] He said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." And she said, "*It will be* all right." [24] Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Drive [the animal] fast; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you." [25] So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, there is the Shunammite *woman*. [26] Please run now to meet her and ask her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." [27] When she came to the mountain to the man of God, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi approached to push her away; but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is desperate *and* troubled within her; and the Lord has hidden *the reason* from me and has not told me." [28] Then she said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not give me false hope'?" [29] Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins (prepare now!) and take my staff in your hand, and go [to the woman's house]; if you meet any man [along the way], do not greet him and if a man greets you, do not [stop to] answer him; and lay my staff on the face of the boy [as soon as you reach the house]." [30] The mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So Elisha arose and followed her. [31] Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound or response [from the boy]. So he turned back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy has not awakened (revived)." [32] When Elisha came into the house, the child was dead and lying on his bed. [33] So he went in, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. [34] Then he went up and lay on the child and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself out on him *and* held him, the boy's skin became warm. [35] Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up [again] and stretched himself out on him; and the boy sneezed seven times and he opened his eyes. [36] Then Elisha called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son." [37] She came and fell at his feet, bowing herself to the ground [in respect and gratitude]. Then she picked up her son and left."

In 2 Kings 4:18-37, Elisha demonstrated his faith in God in several profound ways:

The Right Time to approach God

When the child was grown, one day he got ill and died. When the Shunammite woman's son suddenly fell ill and died, Elisha was her first call. The woman traveled to meet Elisha despite it not being the new moon or the Sabbath.

The New Moon was a significant time in ancient Israel. It marked the beginning of a new month and was often celebrated with sacrifices and feasts. It was a day set apart for worship and reflection (Numbers 10:10, 28:11-15; 1 Samuel 20:5, 24). The Sabbath, observed on the seventh day of the week, is a holy day of rest and worship commanded by God. It was a day to cease from all work and dedicate time to spiritual activities (Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23:3).

The reference to the Sabbath and the New Moon in this passage illustrates the cultural and religious practices of the time, highlighting that these were special days for worship and/or seeking prophetic counsel. The Shunammite woman’s insistence on seeing Elisha despite it not being one of these special days emphasizes the urgency and gravity of her situation, demonstrating her faith in Elisha’s ability to help even outside the usual times of religious observance.

Some Christians falsely believe that the only day to worship God is when one attends a church service on Saturday or Sunday. During the week, Christians spare no time for God. God has given us the leeway and the freedom to go to Him any time we want. In Matthew 11:28, when Jesus says, “Come unto me,” He does not give us a specific time that we should go to Him. The Shunamite woman faced a problem, she did not wait for the Sabbath or the new moon. She approached God immediately through His servant Elisha.

1 Thessalonians 5:17, The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing.” Jesus said the same thing in Luke 18:1 (KJV) - "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" We are to approach God all the time, not only on Sabbaths or when there is a special prayer event.

Responding to Tragedy with Faith

Elisha did not waver in his faith. He immediately responded to the urgent plea of the mother to come and help (2 Kings 4:22). Elisha might have had other things to do but he did not say that he

was too busy to help the Shunamite woman when she approached him with an emergency. Anytime someone comes to us for help and the help that person requires is within our ability, we should not hesitate to do so. We should not procrastinate. We should do it as fast as possible.

Usually, as a child of God, the problems and the assignments that will come to you are within your abilities. Even that which you think is beyond your ability, when you seek God's help and guidance, you will realize that it is within your ability. Luke 1:37 (KJV) - "For with God nothing shall be impossible." God can do all things and when we collaborate with Him, we are able to do all things.

We can liken collaboration to God like two companies partnering on a joint project. One is developing a product and the other is marketing it. When the product is being sold to the market, both companies will receive credits and accolades. Both companies will be recognized as owning that product. It won't be widely known (unless they make it so) that this is the company that created this product and this is the one that marketed it. The joint effort will bless the customers and the companies in return.

Some musicians do not write their own songs as they have song writers (most times ghost writers) who write the songs for them. However, when a song is released, it is attributed to that musician who was seen singing it. Most times we do not know who the song writers behind those songs are. When you collaborate with God, you will be able to do things beyond that which you think is within your abilities.

My friend Kennedy Kaunda told me something that is so profound (I am paraphrasing), "When you are a child of God, God makes you everything that He is. You may not have studied medicine in school but you are a doctor because God is the greatest physician." Philippians 4:13 (NKJV) - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Proverbs 3:27 (NKJV) - "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so." This verse emphasizes the importance of not holding back from doing good when you have the ability and opportunity to benefit others. As we have seen in the passage above, children of God have an unlimited ability that God has given them or wants to give them if they have faith (John 14:12).

Assurance of God's Presence

When Elisha met the woman, he asked her if it was well with her and her family, she responded that it was well. The woman went ahead to hold on to Elisha's feet but Gehazi, Elisha's servant, stopped her. Elisha told Gehazi to leave her alone because her soul is troubled. When Elisha saw the distress of the Shunamite woman, he acknowledged her desperate state but was not initially informed by God about the cause of her distress. Nobody should block you from accessing God. Some people in church have made it their duty to create a roadblock to stop people from going to God. Despite not knowing the cause of the calamity, Elisha was confident in God's ability to intervene (2 Kings 4:27-28).

Prayer and Intercession

Elisha sent Gehazi with his staff to go ahead of them and place the staff on the boy. The woman refused to leave Elisha. She told him, "As the Lord lives and as my soul lives, I will not leave you (2 Kings 4:30)." These exact same words were the words that Elisha had repeatedly told Elijah before Elijah left him. They were the same words that Elisha uttered to Elijah before God gave Elisha the double spirit of Elijah.

We need to go extra miles for God. Go beyond what your pastor or any spiritual book has told you to do for righteousness. For example, when a pastor asks a favor from you, go beyond the favor that he has asked you. The same principle should apply when dealing with your friends. If your church tells you to fast once a month, try fasting once a week. If it tells you to fast once a week, try fasting twice a week.

Always love to go beyond. Doing the bare minimum for God is not enough. The Bible tells you that the bare minimum you should return as tithe is 10%. It would not hurt; it will bless you more when you give more than 10%. The woman uttering these same words to Elisha also shows that whatever you do to people, expect it to be done to you.

The law of sowing and reaping is real not just in agricultural science but in everything that pertains to life. When you sow good seeds, be sure that you will reap good seeds. You will not always reap them immediately but you will surely reap them.

When the woman told Elisha that she would not leave him, Elisha saw her faith demonstrated through her determination and followed her. Upon reaching the boy, Elisha prayed earnestly to the Lord for the child's life to be restored (2 Kings 4:33). This act of prayer demonstrated Elisha's reliance on God's power and his willingness to intercede on behalf of others in need.

Physical Contact and Symbolic Gesture

Gehazi went ahead of them and did as Elisha had commanded but the boy did not respond. Now here we can clearly see that the power of healing was not really in Elisha’s staff. This is because if the power of raising the boy was on his staff, the boy would have been raised by the staff.

Gehazi might have made a mistake in believing that the staff would raise the boy instead of believing that it is the power of God that raises the dead because all life flows from God. That is why God warns us against idol worship. We worship many idols unknowingly. We have traditional and cultural items in our homes which we believe to have certain ‘good’ powers as they were said to have been from certain powerful people in the past.

Some churches have certain physical items that they use in their worship believing that if they use them, their prayers would be more powerful. When Elisha came to where the boy was lying, he did not use his rod. He went in, shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord.

After praying, Elisha did various things like: lying on the child, putting his mouth on the child's mouth, eyes on his eyes, and hands on his hands (2 Kings 4:34). All these were a symbolic act of identification and impartation of life. This physical action showed Elisha's belief that God could use him as a vessel for the boy's healing. After that, the boy sneezed seven times and he eventually woke up. Elisha called the woman and told her to pick up her son. The woman was so grateful, she picked up her son and left.

Persistence and Trust

Elisha's faith is further shown by his persistence in praying and acting for the child's restoration. After the initial attempt by Gehazi failed to revive the child, Elisha did not give up but continued

to trust in God's intervention (2 Kings 4:32-35). We should not give up on God because God has never given up on us. Faith in God is shown through persistence in righteousness.

Witnessing God's Miracle

Ultimately, Elisha's faith was validated when the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes, miraculously restored to life (2 Kings 4:35-37). This event affirmed Elisha's belief in God's power to defy death and bring forth life.

In summary, Elisha's faith in this passage is seen in his immediate response to the crisis. It is also seen in his unwavering trust in God's ability to perform miracles, his persistence in prayer and action, and his witnessing of God's miraculous intervention in restoring the life of the Shunammite woman's son. His actions throughout this event exemplify a deep and unshakable faith in God's sovereignty and power over life and death.

Purifying Poisonous Stew

2 Kings 4:38-41 (AMP) – "[38] Elisha came back to Gilgal during a famine in the land. The sons of the prophets were sitting before him, and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and cook stew for the sons of the prophets." [39] Then one [of them] went into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, although they did not know *what they were*. [40] So they served it for the men to eat. But as they ate the stew, they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot." And they could not

eat it. [41] But he said, “Bring flour.” And he threw it into the pot and said, “Serve it for the people so that they may eat.” Then there was nothing harmful in the pot.”

In 2 Kings 4:38-41, Elisha demonstrated his faith in several significant ways:

Elisha, whose name signifies God's salvation, exercises authority over the poisonous stew by purifying it with flour. This demonstrates his role as a conduit of God's miraculous intervention, turning a potentially deadly situation into one of sustenance and safety for the sons of the prophets.

The use of Gilgal, a place name meaning circle or rolling, highlights the setting where this incident unfolds—a place where prophetic instruction and community were nurtured. It serves as a backdrop to showcase Elisha's teachings and God's intervention in daily life.

The sons of the prophets, though young and learning, witness firsthand the miracle of the poisonous stew being made safe to eat through Elisha's intervention. This reinforces their faith and education in God's ways, preparing them for their future roles as prophets and spiritual leaders.

Trust in God’s Provision During a Famine

Despite the severe famine in the land of Gilgal, Prophet Elisha confidently instructed his servant to prepare a large pot of stew for the sons of the prophets. His directive shows his belief that God would provide sustenance even in the direst of circumstances. The Spirit of God was working through him to give that instruction. God may instruct you to give away almost everything you have if not everything you have because he wants to clear the space to give you more. Therefore, obey Him by faith.

Calm Response to Crisis

When the sons of the prophets cried out about the poisonous stew, Elisha did not panic. Instead, he responded with calmness and authority. That action is his trust in God’s ability to rectify the situation. A genuine Godly person should be firmer in character and personality than granite cliffs that withstand the crashing waves. He should be firmer than the resolve of a marathon runner in the final mile. This is because everybody else in the world is used to panicking as their hearts are

filled with fear due to lacking perfect love. Perfect love and perfect faith give one a spirit of calmness.

Acts 20:24 (KJV) - "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

In this verse, Paul expresses his determination and steadfastness in fulfilling his mission to preach the gospel, regardless of the challenges he faces. He is resolved not to be swayed or deterred from his purpose, emphasizing his commitment to spreading the message given to him by God.

Psalm 15:5 (KJV) - "He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

In Psalm 15, the psalmist describes the characteristics of a person who can dwell in the presence of God. It emphasizes integrity and righteousness, highlighting the importance of ethical behavior, including refraining from charging interest on loans (usury) and avoiding bribery or corruption ("taketh reward against the innocent"). Such a person, who lives according to these principles, is portrayed as stable and steadfast, not shaken, or moved. Such a person is firmer than the celestial mechanics that hold planets in orbit. This is because it is God’s power (that created and sustains those celestial mechanics) that is working through him.

Use of Simple Means to Solve the Problem

Elisha instructed them to bring flour. After they brought flour, he threw it into the pot, declaring the stew safe to eat. This act of using a common, simple substance to neutralize the poison demonstrated his faith that God could work through ordinary means to perform extraordinary miracles. There is nothing and no one ordinary in the kingdom of God. Everything that God has created has extraordinary ability whether we see it or not.

Immediate Action and Declaration

Elisha’s immediate action in addressing the problem and his confident declaration that the stew was safe reflects his unwavering faith in God’s infinite power. He did not hesitate or doubt that God would act to protect and provide for His people.

Demonstration of God’s Sovereignty

The successful purification of the stew, with nothing harmful remaining in the pot, showcased Elisha’s faith in God’s sovereignty over all creation, including natural and potentially harmful elements. This miracle reinforced the message that God is in control and can bring good out of dangerous or hopeless situations.

Mark 16:18 (NKJV) - "They will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Elisha’s actions clearly demonstrated the truth in Mark 16:18. The poisonous stew was purified by the power of God. No weapon formed against God’s people will prosper (Isaiah 54:17).

In the purifying of the poisonous stew passage, Elisha’s faith was shown through his trust in God’s provision during a famine. It is also shown through his calm and confident response to the crisis, his use of simple means under divine guidance, his immediate and faith-filled actions, and the demonstration of God’s sovereign power in making the stew safe to eat.

Feeding a Hundred Men

2 Kings 4:42-44 (AMP) – "[42] Now [at another time] a man from Baal-shalisha came and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and fresh ears of grain [in the husk] in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give it to the people [affected by the famine] so that they may eat." [43] His servant said, "How am I to set [only] this before a hundred [hungry] men?" He said, "Give it to the people so that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and

have *some* left.’” [44] So he set it before them, and they ate and left *some*, in accordance with the Word of the Lord.”

Baal-shalisha means "Lord of Shalisha" or "The third idol." It was a region in ancient Israel. The name signifies the area’s association with idol worship, particularly the worship of Baal, a Canaanite deity. In this passage, the man from Baal-shalisha brings food to Elisha, symbolizing a shift from reliance on pagan gods to recognition of the true God's power and provision. The act of bringing the first fruits to Elisha, the prophet of God, highlights a turning point where God’s sustenance is acknowledged during a time of famine.

Elisha’s name means “God is salvation” and is highly relevant to the passage, as it underscores his role as God’s instrument of salvation and provision. By instructing his servant to distribute the bread and grain to the people, Elisha demonstrated faith in God’s promise of abundance. This miracle not only provides for the people's immediate physical needs but it also reinforces the message that God is their ultimate source of salvation and sustenance.

In 2 Kings 4:42-44, Elisha showed faith in God's provision in several ways:

Belief in God's Word

When presented with a seemingly inadequate amount of food (twenty loaves of barley bread and some fresh grain), Elisha commanded his servant to distribute it to a hundred hungry men. Despite the servant's doubt about feeding many people with little supply, Elisha firmly declared, "Give it to the people so that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’" Elisha's faith was grounded in the belief that God's promise would be fulfilled and the food will be in abundance, regardless of the apparent scarcity.

2 Chronicles 20:20 (KJV) – “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper."

If the servant had not obeyed what God had commanded him through His prophet Elijah, he would not have been able to perform that miracle. We have bypassed many miracles which God intended us to do by not obeying Him. As a result, our faith in God gets weakened as we are unable to

witness the power of God in full capacity. That is the current tragedy with the modern church. We rarely obey God fully and when we do, we do the bare minimum.

Acting in Obedience

Elisha's faith prompted him to act in obedience to God's command. The prophet of God did not hesitate or question whether there would be enough food but trusted in God's assurance that it would suffice. His immediate response to distribute the food demonstrated his unwavering belief in God's ability to multiply and provide abundantly.

Witnessing God's Miracle

As the food was distributed, Elisha got the privilege to witness firsthand the miraculous multiplication of the bread and grain. The hundred men not only ate their fill but also had some left over, precisely as God had promised through Elisha. This event confirmed Elisha's faith and showcased God's power to provide beyond human limitations.

Faith in God's Provision

By instructing the distribution of the food despite its apparent inadequacy, Elisha showed his confidence in God's provision. His faith was not in the scarcity of the food but in the abundant nature of God and God’s faithfulness to fulfill His word and meet the needs of His people.

In essence, Elisha's faith in this narrative of feeding one hundred men is demonstrated through his unwavering trust in God's promise of provision, his obedience to God's instruction to distribute the food, and his witness of God's miraculous multiplication to feed a multitude. This event serves as a testament to Elisha's deep faith in God's ability to provide abundantly out of what we consider to be scarce.

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Healing Naaman's Leprosy

2 Kings 5:1-14 (AMP) – "[1] Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram (Syria), was *considered* a great man by his king, and was highly respected because through Naaman the Lord had given victory to Aram (Syria). He was also a man of courage, *but he was* a leper. [2] The Arameans (Syrians) had gone out in bands [as raiders] and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife [as a servant]. [3] She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master [Naaman] were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he

would heal him of his leprosy." [4] Naaman went in and told his master [the king], "The girl who is from the land of Israel said such and such." [5] Then the king of Aram (Syria) said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel (Jehoram the son of Ahab)." So he left and took with him ten talents of silver and 6,000 *shekels* of gold, and ten changes of clothing. [6] And he brought the letter to the king of Israel. It said, "And now when this letter comes to you, I will have sent my servant Naaman to you, so that you may heal him of his leprosy." [7] When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes [in shock and outrage at the request] and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me [a request] to heal a man of his leprosy? Just consider [what he is asking] and see how he is seeking an opportunity [for a battle] with me." [8] Now when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent *word* to the king, asking, "Why have you torn your clothes? Just let Naaman come to me, and he shall know that there is a [true] prophet in Israel." [9] So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the entrance of Elisha's house. [10] Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will* be clean." [11] But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Indeed! I thought 'He would at least come out to [see] me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place [of leprosy] and heal the leper.' [12] Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus [in Aram], better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. [13] Then his servants approached and said to him, "My father, if the prophet had told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he has said to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" [14] So he went down and plunged himself into the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said; and his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean."

In 2 Kings 5:1-14, Elisha demonstrated profound faith through his interaction with Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army.

Naaman, despite his high status and valor, was afflicted with leprosy, a condition that marred his otherwise pleasant and esteemed life. His name's meaning contrasts with his dire situation, highlighting the irony of his condition. His healing by the prophet Elisha demonstrates that true pleasantness and restoration come from obedience to God.

Aram (Syria) means "Exalted" or "high place." Aram, often at odds with Israel, represents a powerful nation. The fact that Naaman, a commander from Aram, seeks help from a prophet in

Israel signifies the recognition of God's power beyond Israel's borders, suggesting that God's influence and authority are universal.

Samaria means "watch mountain" or "watchtower." Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The reference to the prophet in Samaria (Elisha) underscores the spiritual watchfulness and presence of God in the land. It also serves as the setting for Naaman's encounter with Elisha, highlighting the city as a place where God's power is revealed.

Elisha means "God is salvation." Elisha's role as a prophet who conveys God's instructions for Naaman's healing aligns with his name, signifying that salvation and healing come through God. Elisha's simple but profound instructions to Naaman reflect the power of faith and obedience to God's Word.

Jordan means "Descender" or "flowing down." The Jordan River symbolizes purification and transformation. Naaman's immersion in the Jordan seven times leads to his healing, signifying a descent into humility and obedience, followed by a rise to new life and cleanliness. The river serves as a medium for God's miraculous power, emphasizing the importance of following God's specific instructions.

Abana means "Stony" or "perennial" river. Pharpar means "Swift" or "frivolous" river. Naaman's preference for the rivers of Damascus, which he perceives as superior, reflects human pride and skepticism. These rivers symbolize his initial resistance to God's ways. His eventual submission to washing in the Jordan highlights the theme that God's ways, though they may seem simple or inferior by human standards, are ultimately effective and superior.

Confidence in God's Power and Authority

Naaman was the commander of the army of the king of Aram (Syria) and he was highly respected. He was respected because through him, God had given victory to Aram. God is so generous. He makes you succeed and makes all praise go to you. God is currently invisible (Hebrews 11:27).

Therefore, when you do something great, it will be through His power. However, most people are going to commend you and respect you because they cannot see God. As a Christian it is your duty to direct them to God and let them know that it is God who has enabled you to achieve all that.

Naaman was a courageous man, but he had leprosy (2 Kings 5:1). God created us as perfect people, but sin caused us to be imperfect. As a result, no one is born perfect. One may be good in very many things but miss out on one thing. God wants to make us perfect. He wants to restore that one thing which we are missing. That is why He wants us to go to Him.

The Syrians had taken into captivity a little Israelite girl. The girl said to her mistress, "I wish that my master [Naaman] were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would heal him of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:3)." Naaman told the king of Syria what the girl had said. The king of Syria told Naaman to go and that he will send a letter to the king of Israel, Jehoram, the son of Ahab (2 Kings 5:5).

When the king of Israel received a letter from the king of Syria, he said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me [a request] to heal a man of his leprosy? Just consider [what he is asking] and see how he is seeking an opportunity [for a battle] with me." In other words, the king could not do what he was requested, even though he was a king and was probably the most respected person by people in the land. God has powerful people on this earth who do not necessarily sit on royal thrones and may not be famous or rich, but they are able to do that which kings and the most recognized people in the world cannot do.

When Elisha heard that the king tore his clothes, he asked them to tell Naaman to come to him (2 Kings 5:8). Naaman went with his horses and chariots like a true military commander (2 Kings 5:9). Elisha did not even go to personally meet him. Instead, he sent a messenger to tell him to go and tell him to wash in the River Jordan seven times and he will be healed from leprosy (2 Kings 5:10).

Elisha refused to meet Naaman, a top commander who came with royal horses and chariots and told him to go and wash in River Jordan. These actions were necessary to point Naaman to the virtue of humility and to cultivate his faith. When you have faith and humility you get closer to God and it is through closeness to God that one is healed and blessed. Proverbs 22:4 (KJV) – By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life."

When you go to God to receive blessings, God will take you through a process that will cultivate humility and faith in your heart before He blesses you.

God did the same thing to the Israelites when He took them through the wilderness experience.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. [2] And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. [3] And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

When Naaman had what Elisha had told him to go and wash himself in the Jordan River, he was not happy. He said that there were better rivers where he was, mentioning River Abana and River Pharpar. He thought that healing was inherent in a river, not knowing that healing came from God. It is with no doubt that God has set certain elements in nature that have curing properties, but we should be fully and always aware that God is the master healer and life giver and not those things in nature. For it is God who allows nature to heal you.

We can see this evidence in the story of the man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years. The man told Jesus that he had no person to dip him in the water and as a result he was not able to receive healing. Jesus asked him, “Wilt thou be made whole.” Jesus healed him instantly without getting him into the healing waters (John 5:8-9).

Naaman, a top army commander from Syria, probably expected a grand, dramatic healing involving significant rituals. When Elisha simply instructed him to wash in the Jordan, Naaman felt it was too simple and ordinary. Naaman specifically mentioned two rivers in Damascus, such as Abana and Pharpar, as being superior. He considered these rivers to be cleaner and more prestigious compared to the Jordan.

When Naaman questioned Elisha, his servants persuaded him to do what the prophet had commanded. They told him in 2 Kings 5:13 (KJV) - “My father, if the prophet had told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he has said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” They challenged Naaman’s obedience that he was only willing to obey that which is noble and honorable but was not willing to obey that which seemed lowly and humble. Luckily, Naaman obeyed and dipped inside the river seven times. The Bible says in 2 Kings 5:14 (KJV) – “And his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean.”

Directing Naaman to Act in Faith

Elisha did not even go out to personally meet Naaman. Instead, he sent a messenger with a simple instruction: “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.” This directive required Naaman to act in faith, demonstrating that healing would come through obedience to God’s Word, not through Elisha’s physical presence or any dramatic ritual.

Elisha’s faith was in God’s instructions, knowing that if Naaman obeyed, God would act. God might not have acted in our lives because we have not yet obeyed. He may have given us an assignment to do but we do it partially while God requires us to do it to completion so that He gives us the blessings that we have been eagerly waiting and praying for.

Challenging Human Expectations and Pride

Naaman’s response to Elisha’s instructions revealed his expectations of how a miracle should occur. He was probably offended that Elisha did not come out to perform a dramatic healing ceremony. He also questioned why he should wash in the Jordan River instead of the rivers of Damascus.

Elisha probably wondered why he had to travel that whole journey when all he was required to do was to wash himself in a river. Elisha’s faith included challenging Naaman’s pride and preconceived notions about how God operates. Elisha trusted that God’s way, though simple and humble, was sufficient and powerful.

Encouraging Complete Obedience

Naaman’s servants played a crucial role by persuading him to follow Elisha’s instructions despite his initial disappointments. That is why it is good to travel with people when going for a mission or when carrying out an assignment. God has created different people with different ways of

thinking and with different abilities so that they can collaborate. If Naaman had traveled alone, he would have probably neglected God's command through Elisha.

Naaman's eventual obedience to God led to his healing. Elisha's faith involved giving instructions that required full compliance, illustrating that God's miracles often require total and humble obedience.

Demonstrating God's Inclusivity

Although the focus of this story is primarily on the events leading up to Naaman's healing, the broader implication of this miracle was that God's grace and power extended beyond Israel to a foreigner, a commander of the enemy army. Elisha's faith in performing this miracle demonstrated God's willingness to heal and bless even those outside of Israel. This narrative reveals the universality of God's love and power. This act of healing the Syrian commander Naaman, showed that God's power and mercy are not limited by national or ethnic boundaries.

Genesis 12:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

While reading the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, people misunderstand God. They think that God only favors the Israelites and He cannot favor other people. God chose the Israelites so that they would be an example to other nations. If they faithfully obeyed Him, He would set them "on high above all other nations of the world (Deuteronomy 28:1)". As a result, other nations would look at how the Israelites are blessed and they would go to Him and be blessed. The blessings that God promised Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 were meant to bless the entire world. God chose Abraham so that he could be an example of how God blesses people and that through him all nations of the earth would get blessed.

Trusting God's Timing and Methods

Elisha's faith is further shown in his trust in God's specific timing and method for the healing of Naaman. The Aramean commander had to wash in the Jordan River seven times. This specific instruction and the act of repeated washing indicated a process, requiring trust in God's timing and method.

Elisha believed that if Naaman followed through completely, God would fulfill His promise of healing. This dipping into the river seven times parallels the Israelites going round the City of Jericho seven times. Hebrews 11:30 – "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

In conclusion, Elisha's faith in this narrative is multifaceted. It encompasses confidence in God's power, adherence to divine instructions, challenging human pride, encouraging obedience, demonstrating God's inclusivity, and trusting in God's timing and methods. Through his actions, Elisha not only facilitated a miraculous healing but also highlighted key principles of faith, obedience, and the boundless nature of God's mercy and grace.

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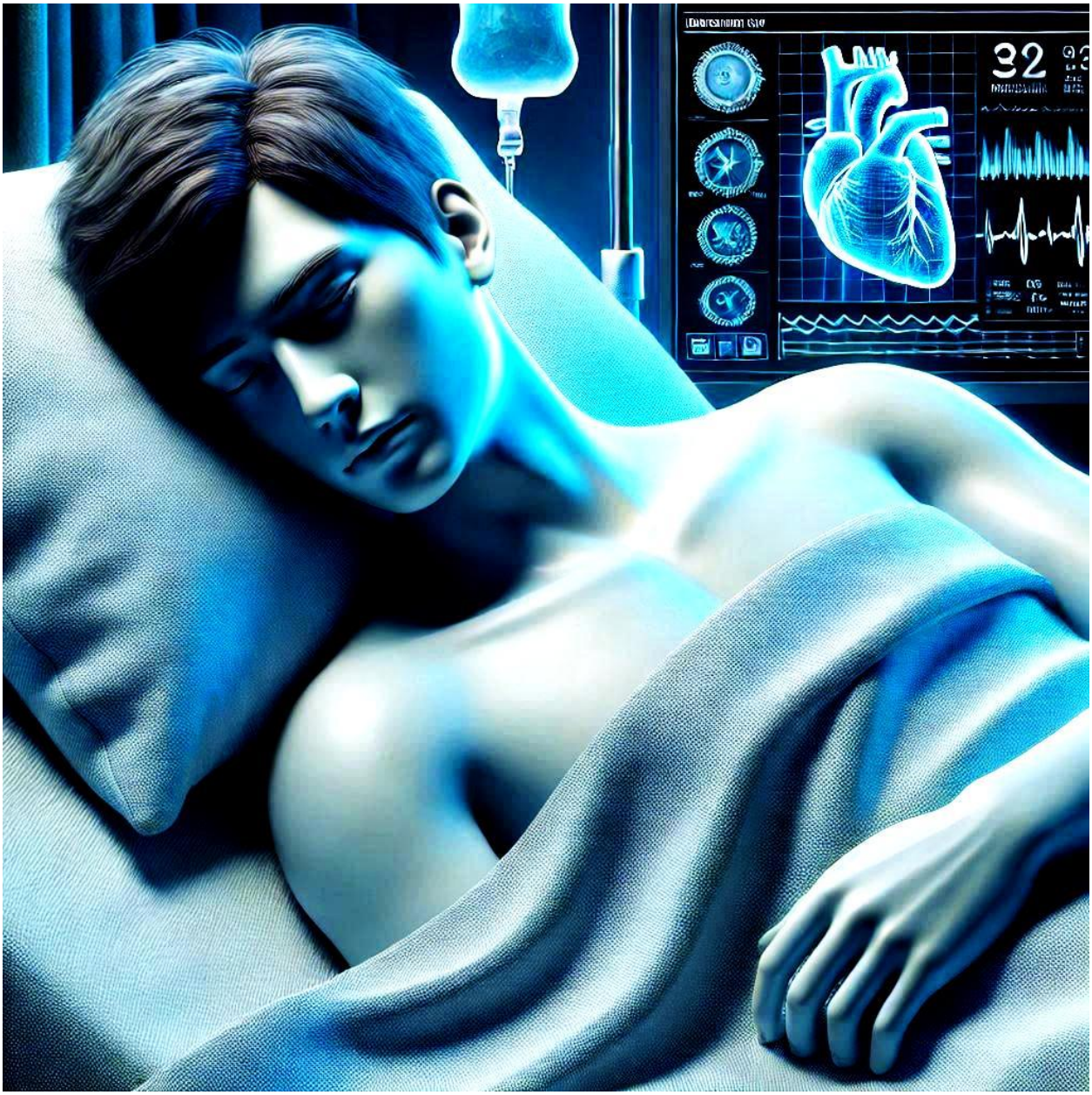
Cursing Gehazi with Leprosy



2 Kings 5:20-27 (AMP) – "[20] when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "My master has spared this Naaman the Aramean (Syrian), by not accepting from him what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him." [21] So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" [22] And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'Just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them

a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.'" [23] Naaman said, "Please take two talents." And he urged him [to accept], and tied up two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them in front of Gehazi. [24] When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house [for safekeeping]; and he sent the men away, and they left. [25] Then he went in and stood before his master. Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He said, "Your servant went nowhere." [26] Elisha said to him, "Did my heart not go *with you,* when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a [proper] time to accept money and clothing and olive orchards and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants? [27] Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So Gehazi departed from his presence, a leper *as white* as snow."

Gehazi, whose name suggests vision, ironically acts with spiritual blindness by lying and pursuing personal gain. His deceitful actions directly oppose the prophetic vision and integrity expected of him, revealing his moral and spiritual corruption.

Elisha, whose name signifies God's salvation, remains true to his calling by rejecting Naaman's gifts, emphasizing that God's miracles and blessings cannot be bought. His prophetic insight allows him to see through Gehazi's lie, demonstrating the sharp contrast between his own integrity and Gehazi's greed.

Naaman's experience with Elisha reflects the true pleasantness and peace that come from humility and obedience to God. Despite Gehazi's attempts to exploit Naaman's gratitude, Naaman remains a figure of God's grace and transformative power. The use of Ephraim in Gehazi's lie is deeply ironic. A name meaning fruitfulness is employed in a deceitful scheme that results in Gehazi's ultimate fruitlessness and curse. This highlights the irony and consequences of Gehazi's actions.

Adherence to Divine Integrity

Elisha showed faith by adhering to God's principles of honesty and integrity. When Naaman, the Syrian commander, was healed of his leprosy, Elisha refused to accept any gifts from him. This act underscored his belief that God's miracles should not be monetized. Despite the potential for personal gain, Elisha's denial was a testament to his faith in God's provision and the importance of

maintaining the purity and holiness of God’s work. Gehazi’s pursuit of Naaman to acquire wealth, under the false pretense that it was on Elisha’s behalf, directly contradicted Elisha’s faithful stance.

Genesis 14:23 (KJV) - "That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."

In Genesis 14:23, the same integrity demonstrated by Elisha can be seen with Abraham while he was still named Abram. Abraham had just returned from a triumphant war where he rescued his nephew Lot and recovered possessions taken by the enemy. The king of Sodom offered Abraham the recovered goods as a reward for his efforts.

Abram refuses the king's offer emphatically. By stating that he would not take even the smallest item ("from a thread even to a shoelatchet"). Abram emphasizes his complete refusal to accept any material benefits from the king of Sodom.

Abraham's motivation for refusing the goods is to ensure that the king of Sodom could never claim that he had made him rich. Abraham strongly believes that it is God alone who can make him prosperous and not human beings. We rely on human beings too much. As children of God, we are meant to benefit people of the world more than they benefit us, no matter how materially rich they may seem to be. We are not supposed to break God’s rules because of them.

Abraham wanted it to be clear that his prosperity is from God alone, not from any human source. This act underscores Abram's faith and trust in God's provision and his desire to maintain a testimony that his blessings are from God, not from alliances or rewards from worldly sources. Abraham's refusal to take the goods demonstrates his commitment to give God the glory for his success and blessings, avoiding any potential for others to link his prosperity to human beings.

Prophetic Insight and Discernment

Elisha’s faith is also evidenced by his supernatural knowledge and discernment. He did not physically follow Gehazi that is why Gehazi did what he did. When Gehazi returned and lied about his actions, Prophet Elisha, through divine revelation, knew exactly what had transpired. Elisha said, “Did my heart not go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?” This insight was not merely human intuition but a gift from God, showing Elisha’s reliance on and

connection with divine knowledge. Elisha's faith enabled him to see beyond the physical realm into the spiritual truths of Gehazi's deceitful actions. The good news is you and me can see into the spiritual realm just as prophets do if we call unto God (Jeremiah 33:3).

Upholding God's Justice and Consequences

Elisha's faith is further demonstrated in his unwavering commitment to uphold God's justice. When Gehazi lied to him, Elisha pronounced a severe judgment: "Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." This decision reflected Elisha's understanding of the seriousness of Gehazi's sin and his faith in enforcing God's righteous standards. By pronouncing this judgment, Elisha displayed his faith in God's justice system, showing that actions against divine principles have severe repercussions. Elisha's response was not personal revenge but a reflection of divine justice.

Teaching Through Example

In this episode, Elisha's actions serve as a teaching moment, both for Gehazi and for all who would hear of this event. By maintaining his integrity, exercising prophetic insight, and enforcing God's justice, Elisha modeled what it means to live by faith. His example showed that true faith involves more than belief. It requires aligning one's actions with God's will, even when it is difficult or when others do not understand.

In conclusion, Elisha's faith in this passage is highlighted by his commitment to God's integrity principles, his reliance on divine revelation, and his upholding of God's justice. His ability to discern Gehazi's deceit and his willingness to pronounce God's judgment illustrate a deep trust in God's justice and wisdom. Elisha's actions demonstrated that faith is not only about believing in God's power but also about living out that belief through righteous decisions and actions.

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Making an Iron Axe Head Float

2 Kings 6:1-7 (AMP) – "[1] Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look now, the place where we live near you is too small for us. [2] Please let us go to the Jordan [River] and let each man take from there a beam [for the building]; and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live." And he answered, "Go." [3] Then one said, "Please be willing to go with your servants." So he answered, "I shall go." [4] So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down [some of] the trees. [5] But it happened that as one was cutting down a beam, the axe head fell

into the water; and he cried out and said, “Oh no, my master! It was borrowed!” [6] The man of God said, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, Elisha cut off a stick and threw it in there, and made the iron [axe head] float. [7] He said, “Pick it up for yourself.” So he reached out with his hand and took it.”

Know When to Say Yes and No

Elisha was approached by the sons of the prophets who needed more space to live because the place they were living in was too small for them. He did not judge them or condemn them for wanting better living conditions as some Christians would. He did not tell them that they were too materialistic. When they asked him to come with them to the Jordan River, Elisha agreed without hesitation (2 Kings 6:3). This shows his willingness to be involved in their practical concerns and to support their endeavors.

What the sons of the prophets asked Elisha to do was not sinful. It was not against God’s commandments. Thus, it was not against God’s will. Some people take pride in saying no to everything because they think it makes them look smarter and firmer in character. We have a lot of life coaches advising people to say no just for the sake of saying no and not telling them what to say no to. Some tell them to follow their heart.

This is a teaching that sounds good but is erroneous. It is a teaching that people like because it encourages selfishness and self-centeredness and human beings are selfish in nature. Saying no to sin is absolutely right as it prevents you from curses and invites blessings to you. Saying no to righteousness does the opposite. It blocks you from blessings and invites curses. What you have been praying and crying for, might be placed in what you are saying no to.

For example, I did not want to join the children’s ministry but I did not say no when I was called to do it because I knew it was God’s will. Thus, I kept God’s will above my will. After joining it, I got more blessings than I expected, such as this book and the public speaking skill. I also got direction from God on what to do with my poetry talent. I knew I had a poetic talent but did not know what to do with it before I joined the children’s ministry.

As a Christian, have an open mind. As long as someone is not telling you to sin and you have the time to do what they are telling you to, say yes. Saying yes to righteousness makes you a blessing to people like how it made Elisha to be a blessing to the sons of the prophets. If Elisha had said no, the sons of the prophets would not have seen God's power through the floating of the axe. If Elisha had said no, I would not be blessing you with this section. Righteousness makes you impact people that you have no idea of.

In the profound narrative of the Good Samaritan, the Good Samaritan is applauded because of his practical faith. Faith in God should be practical, not theoretical. The purpose of knowledge is application. It is not enough to know all the facts in the Bible if we do not apply them. Elisha showed his faith in this narrative by accompanying the sons of the prophets.

As a Christian, have an open mind. As long as someone is not telling you to sin and you have the time to do what they are telling you to, say yes. Saying yes to righteousness makes you a blessing to people like how it made Elisha to be a blessing to the sons of the prophets. If Elisha had said no, the sons of the prophets would not have seen God's power through the floating of the axe. If Elisha had said no, I would not be blessing you with this section. Righteousness makes you impact people that you have no idea of.

To illustrate more clearly on saying yes, this is the perfect example because we are reading about Elisha in this chapter. A fellow children's ministry teacher at Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist church whose name is Agnes gave me a short notice to help her with a skit for the children's story on Sabbath. She gave me that assignment on Friday afternoon as the Sabbath was approaching. That was my first time to do a children's story in front of the whole church ever since I joined the children's ministry.

I was not the one telling the story. Agnes was telling the story. She was telling it in the form of a skit. She needed me to do the voice of Elisha in the story of Multiplying the Widow's oil. As we have seen above, the story is found in 2 Kings 4:1-7. It was short notice. On the other hand, I knew it was God's will as much as it was on such short notice. Therefore, I said yes to her request.

Sabbath came and we did the story. After the church service, I received many compliments from people concerning my voice. A few people told me I need to use my voice to make money. I went and thought about it and through God's guidance, He gave me the direction to start a Christian

podcast. Saying yes to such a simple thing opened a door to endless blessings because through it, people will get saved and inherit eternal life. There are blessings in church and there are blessings when you say yes to righteousness.

Problem-solving with God's Power

The man cried out in distress when his borrowed axe head fell into the water and got lost because it was borrowed (2 Kings 6:5). Elisha's response was immediate and showed faith in God's might. He did not panic or dismiss the situation but took action by asking where it fell (2 Kings 6:6). Then, using a simple stick, Elisha made the iron axe head float, demonstrating his faith that God could intervene even in such a simple matter.

God is willing to solve all our problems whether major or minor. Sometimes we feel that some things are too small to ask God. Human beings with carnal hearts are the ones who may think of your question as too stupid to be answered and maybe it is a genuine question. They are the ones who may think of your matter as too small to be addressed. Therefore, they may end up dismissing you even before you tell them your problem. God is not like that. God wants to address all our problems, whether big or small. If you are a student and you have lost your pen and pencil, pray before looking for it. Tell God all your worries for He cares for you and He is there for you.

Elisha's command to the man to reach out and take the axe head from the water indicated his confidence in God's ability to provide solutions. He did not doubt or question whether God could make the iron float; he acted with faith and expected God to intervene, which He did. He told the man to pick up the floating axe head because it was a task that the man could do.

God does the hard part (what you cannot do) and leaves the easy part for you to do. He does this so that you may get the privilege of participating in His great plan. He also does this so that you may get the privilege to apply your faith.

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Blinding the Aramean Army

2 Kings 6:8-23 (AMP) – “[8] Now the king of Aram (Syria) was making war against Israel, and he consulted with his servants, saying, “My camp shall be in such and such a place.” [9] The man of God sent *word* to the king of Israel saying, “Be careful not to pass by this place, because the Arameans are pulling back to there.” [10] Then the king of Israel sent *word* to the place about which Elisha had warned him; so he guarded himself there repeatedly. [11] Now the heart of the king of Aram (Syria) was enraged over this thing. He called his servants and said to them, “Will you not

tell me which of us is helping the king of Israel?” [12] One of his servants said, “None [of us is helping him], my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” [13] So he said, “Go and see where he is, so that I may send [men] and seize him.” And he was told, “He is in Dothan.” [14] So he sent horses and chariots and a powerful army there. They came by night and surrounded the city. [15] The servant of the man of God got up early and went out, and behold, there was an army with horses and chariots encircling the city. Elisha’s servant said to him, “Oh no, my master! What are we to do?” [16] Elisha answered, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” [17] Then Elisha prayed and said, “Lord, please, open his eyes that he may see.” And the Lord opened the servants eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha. [18] When the Arameans came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, “Please strike this people (nation) with blindness.” And God struck them with blindness, in accordance with Elisha’s request. [19] Then Elisha said to the Arameans, “This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me and I will lead you to the man whom you are seeking.” And he led them to Samaria. [20] When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, “Lord, open the eyes of these *men,* so that they may see.” And the Lord opened their eyes and they saw. Behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. [21] When the king of Israel (Jehoram) saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?” [22] Elisha answered, “You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and bow? Serve them bread and water, so that they may eat and drink, and go back to their master [King Ben-hadad].” [23] So the king prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Aram did not come into the land of Israel again.”

Aram means "exalted" or "high place." Aram represents a nation that often posed a threat to Israel. The exalted status of Aram contrasts with its continuous defeats and frustrations orchestrated by God's interventions through Elisha. This highlights God's supremacy over even the most exalted human powers.

The continuous defeats encountered by Aram show that when you disobey God, you will not live up to the standards of your name. In other words, you will not live up to the standards of your calling. Aram means exalted or high place but it keeps on getting defeated because its people disobey God.

Elisha’s name, which means “God is salvation” signifies his role as a divine instrument of deliverance. Throughout the passage, his actions such as predicting the Aramean movements, praying for the servant's vision, and leading the blinded Arameans, demonstrate that God’s salvation and protection are available to Israel through his prophetic ministry.

Israel means "God contends" or "God prevails." Israel’s name is a constant reminder of God’s ongoing relationship and struggles with His people. In this passage, Israel prevails against Aram not by military might but through divine intervention and prophetic insight, showcasing God’s power to contend for His people.

Dothan means "two wells." Dothan was a small town north of Samaria. The location of Elisha and his servant here symbolizes a place of provision and revelation. It is here that the servant’s eyes are opened to see the spiritual reality surrounding them, signifying that divine provision and protection are always present, even if not immediately visible.

Samaria means "watch mountain" or "watchtower." As the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria represented the political and military center of Israel. The Arameans’ unintentional arrival here under Elisha’s guidance highlights the futility of human plans against divine guidance and the ultimate sovereignty of God over human affairs.

Prophetic Insight

Elisha consistently receives divine revelation about the plans of the king of Aram (Syria) and communicates them to the king of Israel, which frustrates the king of Aram (2 Kings 6:9-10). This shows Elisha's faith in God's ability to reveal hidden things and guide His people.

Confidence in God's Protection

When the city of Dothan is surrounded by the Aramean army, Elisha's servant is fearful, but Elisha reassures him by saying, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (16). Elisha's statement reflects his unwavering faith in the unseen spiritual forces aligned with God's protection.

Do we truly realize that with God we are the majority? Unfortunately, most of us acclaimed followers of Christ do not know that. The reason is that we are more in contact with the physical than we are with the spiritual. We only depend on what our physical eyes can see, what our physical ears can hear, what our physical nose can smell, what our physical hands can touch, and what our physical tongues can taste. Sadly, we think, that is all that life entails. We grab the small picture and throw away the big picture. Physical life is the small picture while spiritual life is the big picture.

Matthew 17:19-21 (KJV) – "[19] Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? [20] And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. [21] Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

In Matthew 17:19-21, the disciples of Jesus were unable to cast out a demon from a boy, and they asked Jesus why they failed. Jesus attributes their inability to their lack of faith. He emphasizes the power of faith, even as small as a mustard seed, to achieve seemingly impossible things. Matthew 17:21 indicates that some spiritual battles require a higher level of spiritual discipline, specifically prayer and fasting, to overcome.

Commenting on Matthew 17:19-21, Myron Golden says that Jesus meant, "The reason you could not cast out this demon is because you are so in tune with how things seem that you could not see how things are."

Myron said this while he was emphasizing how closing one's eyes when they pray makes them less in tune with the physical vision and more in tune with the spiritual vision. How being in a quiet place when one prays, makes them less in tune with the physical noise and more in tune with the spiritual environment. He goes on to explain that praying and fasting requires one to deprive the flesh of physical food and feed it with the spiritual food. The deprivation of the flesh makes you more in tune with the spiritual (eating God's Word) than the physical (eating physical food).

The closer we draw to God the more in tune we are going to be with the spiritual realm. We shall be able to see things as they are in the spiritual domain like Elisha and not things as they seem in the physical domain like Elisha's servant.

Prayer and Miraculous Intervention

Elisha prays for his servant's eyes to be opened, and God grants this request. When the servant's eyes are opened, the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding them is revealed (2 Kings 6:17). This demonstrates Elisha's faith in the power of prayer and in God's ability to intervene supernaturally.

Compassion and Mercy

After the Aramean army is struck with blindness and led into Samaria, Elisha demonstrates compassion by instructing the king of Israel not to harm them but to provide for them (verses 18-23). He had made them blind to show them the power of the living God and to protect his servant and himself. However, he did not want to permanently harm them because he wanted them to come to repentance and get saved.

When God punishes us and still retains us alive, He wants us to take that opportunity and get saved. God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18) and He desires that His servants should also delight in forgiving others. This act of mercy shows Elisha's faith in God's justice and desire for reconciliation rather than retaliation.

Overall, Elisha's actions in this narrative of blinding the Syrian Army illustrate his deep trust in God's guidance, protection, supernatural intervention, and mercy. Elisha relies completely on God in the face of danger and adversity, displaying a faith that not only believes in God's power but also acts accordingly with compassion and wisdom.

Prophesying the End of a Famine

2 Kings 7:1-20 (AMP) – "[1] Then Elisha said, "Hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of finely-milled flour will sell for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.'" [2] Then the royal officer on whose arm the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven [for the rain], could this thing take place?" Elisha said, "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but [because you doubt] you will not eat of it." [3] Now four men who were lepers were at the entrance

of the [city's] gate; and they said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die? [4] If we say, 'We will enter the city'—then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit still here, we will also die. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Arameans (Syrians). If they let us live, we will live; and if they kill us, we will only die." [5] So they got up at twilight to go to the Aramean camp. But when they came to the edge of the camp, there was no one there. [6] For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. They had said to one another, "The king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come [and fight] against us." [7] So the Arameans set out and fled during the twilight, and left their tents, horses, and donkeys, *even left* the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives. [8] When these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried away from there silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they went back and entered another tent and carried [some valuable things] from there *also*, and went and hid them. [9] Then they said one to another, "We are not doing the right thing. This is a day of good news, yet we are keeping silent. If we wait until the morning light, some punishment [for not reporting this now] will come on us. So now come, let us go and tell the king's household." [10] So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city. They told them, "We went to the camp of the Arameans (Syrians), and behold, there was no one there, nor the sound of man there—only the horses and donkeys tied up, and the tents [had been left] just as they were." [11] Then the gatekeepers called out and it was reported to the king's household inside [the city]. [12] Then the king got up in the night and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.'" [13] One of his servants replied, "Please let some *men* take five of the horses which remain inside the city. Consider this: [if they are caught then at worst] they will be like all the people of Israel who are left in the city; [even if they are killed then] they will be like all the people of Israel who have already died. So let us send [them] and see [what happens]." [14] So they took two chariots with horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and see." [15] They went after them to the Jordan, and all the road was entirely littered with clothing and equipment which the Arameans (Syrians) had thrown away when they hurriedly fled. And the messengers returned and told the king. [16] Then the people [of Israel] went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So [goods were so plentiful that] a measure of finely-milled flour [was sold] for a shekel, and two

measures of barley for a shekel, in accordance with the Word of the Lord [as spoken through Elisha]. [17] Now the king had appointed the royal officer on whose arm he leaned to be in charge of the [city] gate; and the [starving] people trampled him at the gate [as they struggled to get through for food], and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king came down to him. [18] It happened just as [Elisha] the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two measures of barley will be sold for a shekel and a measure of finely-milled flour for a shekel tomorrow about this time at the gate of Samaria." [19] The royal officer had answered the man of God and said, "Now behold, [even] if the Lord should make windows in heaven, could such a thing happen?" And Elisha had answered, "You will see it with your own eyes, but [because of your doubt] you will not eat it." [20] And so it happened to him; for the people trampled him at the gate, and he died."

Elisha demonstrated remarkable faith in this passage by delivering a seemingly impossible prophecy and standing firm in his conviction despite doubt and opposition. Here is an in-depth look at how his faith was shown:

Prophetic Declaration

Elisha boldly proclaimed, "Hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of finely-milled flour will sell for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria (2 Kings 7:1).'" At the time, Samaria was under siege, leading to extreme famine. The royal officer expressed doubt, questioning how such a miraculous provision could happen even if God opened the windows of heaven.

Elisha's unwavering faith is evident as he confidently predicts not only the end of the famine but also the specific prices of food within a day, showing his deep trust in God's power, provision, and timing. During Noah's time, God had opened the windows of heaven and brought a massive flood. People in those days had never seen rain falling on the earth. Therefore, they could not believe how rain would fall as it had never rained.

A single drop of water pouring from the sky would be extraordinary. A lot of rain in the form a flood pouring would be beyond extraordinary. When God opened the windows of heaven, they were not small rains but the outpouring was so much that even the highest mountains were covered

(Genesis 7:11 and 20). In fact, the waters rose fifteen cubits (about 22.5 feet or 6.9 meters) above the highest mountains, completely covering them (Genesis 7:20).

The flood event not only went beyond what is ordinary, it went beyond what is extraordinary. Quoting the phrase, "The windows of heaven" meant that the royal officer had read or heard about the flood story. He was familiar with the story of how God went beyond what was extraordinary. Elisha was describing an extraordinary event of what will happen the following day. The royal officer doubted that it will happen.

To make matters worse, mentioning the windows of heaven, referenced the phrase from the flood story. This meant that the officer doubted that the floods actually happened. It is a great offense to doubt God's Word. People are not progressing in life because they doubt God's Word. To many, the stories of the Bible seem so far-fetched. The miracles that are documented in the Bible, many think of them as impossible to happen in this present time.

Malachi 3:10-11 (KJV) – "[10] Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [11] And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."

When God promises that He will open the windows of heaven for you when you return a tithe, it means that He will go beyond what is extraordinary to bless you. He will do just like He did during the flood and during Elisha's time when he prophesied the end of the famine.

The Right Thing Should be Done on Time

2 Kings 7:9 (AMP) - "Then they said to one another, "We are not doing the right thing. This is a day of good news, yet we are keeping silent about it. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come on us for not reporting this. Now then, come, let us go and tell the king's household."

The lepers acknowledged that they are not doing the right thing by failing to tell others about the good news that they had received. Failure to evangelize is selfishness. The gospel has benefited

you, why don't you want it to benefit others? The lepers could not wait till morning to deliver the good news. They considered it a sin.

Delaying good is sinful because you are depriving the person of the good that God has given you to benefit them with. The problem with delay is that you have no control of what is going to happen the next year, month, week, day, hour, minute, second and microsecond. Satan likes it when God's people delay. Therefore, he uses that opportunity to block you from embarking on God's mission.

For example, when you delay to return tithe immediately after you have received your increase, Satan may take that opportunity and bring up something that will make you spend that money. I understand that there is some problem with payment systems in some places which block people from paying immediately. If you are in such a place, you can take an envelope and place that tithe in it and be disciplined not to touch it and ask God to guard your finances till when you are able to return it.

We do not know when we are going to die. When you delay evangelizing, you are assuming that you are bound to live forever. You may die the next minute. John 13:27 (KJ21) - "Then said Jesus unto him, 'That which thou doest, do quickly.'" Whatever God has told you to do, do it quickly.

Handling Skepticism

When the royal officer doubted Elisha's prophecy, Elisha responded firmly, stating that the officer would see the fulfillment but not partake in it due to his lack of faith. This exchange highlighted Elisha's faith in God's Word despite the skepticism of others. He stood firm in his conviction, unshaken by the doubt expressed by a high-ranking official. Elisha's prophecy about the officer's fate was also fulfilled, underscoring his role as a true prophet of God.

It is one thing when someone who we consider to be lower than us (maybe by age, educational status, or class) shows skepticism in what we say. They may be right but because we consider them to be lower than us, we cannot listen to them. On the other hand, when someone who we consider to be higher than us doubts what we have said, we start doubting ourselves even if we are right. Faith in God translates to believing in the highest being in the universe. Believe in God's Word alone.

When we totally believe in God who is the highest, no other being will be able to convince us otherwise. When we fully believe in God we shall sail smoothly over the skepticism of the highest individuals in society because we have believed in one whose thoughts and ways are as high as the heavens are from the earth. Skepticism defeats us when we are not properly aware of what the Word of God says. That will make us live a life of trial and error because lack of knowledge of God's Word results in confusion. Elisha handled that skepticism perfectly because He believed in God's Word.

God's Supernatural Intervention

The fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy was a miraculous event. God caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots and horses, leading them to flee in panic, abandoning their camp. They thought that the king of Israel had collaborated with the king of the Egyptians and the king of the Hittites and was coming to attack them.

The beauty of this story is that the king of the Israelites had not done so. He was probably resting at his palace peacefully. The four lepers entered the Aramean camp by faith and God magnified their steps making them sound like a huge army. That action from God made the Aramean Army flee, leaving behind precious goods. This divine intervention demonstrated Elisha's faith in God's ability to bring about miraculous solutions to dire situations. Elisha trusted that God would provide in ways beyond human comprehension.

Four lepers, acting out of desperation, decided to approach the Syrian camp, discovering it deserted. They initially looted the camp but then felt compelled to share the good news with the city. This part of the story shows how God used unlikely individuals to fulfill His word through Elisha. Elisha's faith was vindicated as God orchestrated the events using the lepers to bring about the promised provision.

The king's messengers verified the lepers' report and found the Syrian camp abandoned, just as Elisha had foretold. The Israelites plundered the Aramean camp, leading to an abundance of food and the fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy regarding food prices. This sequence of events confirmed Elisha's prophetic declaration, demonstrating that his faith in God's Word was not misplaced. The prophecy's precise fulfillment reinforced the idea that Elisha's words were directly from God.

Judgment on the Doubter

The royal officer, who had doubted Elisha's prophecy, was trampled to death at the city gate, fulfilling Elisha's words that he would see the provision but not partake in it. This tragic outcome serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of disbelief and highlights the accuracy and divine authority of Elisha's prophecy.

Elisha's faith in God's message was validated through both the miraculous provision and the judgment on the doubter. In the final judgment, doubting God's Word, will be the common denominator of those who are going to face judgment and burn in the incendiary fire of hell.

The royal official was a highly respected man in society but doubting God's Word got him doomed. Some of those people who are going to burn in hell fire will be respected men and women of society. This is because God is not a respecter of persons, instead, God respects those who respect His Word.

Elisha's faith in this account is portrayed through his bold prophecy, his firm stance in the face of skepticism, his reliance on God's supernatural intervention, and the precise fulfillment of his prophetic word. Elisha's trust in God's promises and timing, despite the seemingly impossible circumstances, underscores his deep and steadfast faith. This narrative not only highlights Elisha's role as a prophet but also serves as a powerful testament to the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises through His chosen servants.

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Saving the Shunammite Woman's Land

2 Kings 8:1-6 (AMP) – "[1] Now Elisha had said to the [Shunammite] woman whose son he had restored to life, "Prepare and go, you and your household, and stay temporarily wherever you can; for the Lord has called for a famine, and moreover, it will come on the land [and continue] for seven years." [2] So the woman set out and did everything in accordance with the word of the man of God. She and her household went and stayed temporarily as foreigners in the land of the Philistines for seven years. [3] At the end of the seven years the woman returned from the land of

the Philistines; and she went to appeal to the king [of Israel] for her house and for her land. [4] Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, “Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done.” [5] And [just] as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, “My lord, O king, this is the woman and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.” [6] When the king asked the woman, she told him [everything]. So the king appointed for her a certain high official, saying, “Restore everything that was hers, including all the produce of the field since the day that she left the land until now.””

Elisha demonstrated faith in the account of saving the Shunammite woman's land (2 Kings 8:1-6) in various key ways:

Prophetic Insight and Obedience

Elisha received a revelation from the Lord God about the coming seven-year famine. He faithfully communicated this message to the Shunammite woman. By predicting a long-term event that required immediate action, Elisha showed his faith in God's revelation.

When God reveals something to you, it would be wise to ask Him if He would want you to communicate it. This is because there are some revelations that are personal to you. There are some that God can show you concerning other people but He only wants you to pray over them and not necessarily to tell that person. There are some that God may show you and may want you to tell the person. Elisha was instructed by God to tell the Shunammite woman of the famine that was going to occur in the land and he did that.

Guidance and Care

Elisha advised the Shunammite woman to leave her land for seven years and seek refuge elsewhere. This instruction required faith that his guidance was divinely inspired and that it was in the woman's best interest to follow it, even if it meant abandoning her home and livelihood temporarily. Some revelations may come from Satan.

Satan may bring a revelation to you in a dream to misguide you or to cause you to misguide others. How can one know that a revelation is divinely inspired? One can know that a revelation is divinely inspired by being close to God. We cultivate our relationship with God by spending time with Him, mainly though prayer and Bible study.

When you are close enough to God and you are well acquainted with His Word you will be able to know if the revelation you are getting is from God or the enemy. Bible study works highly in clearing our minds, removing all the clutter that is placed there by the Devil. Therefore, one is able to have better judgment and discernment and he is able to know and understand even the most secretive mysteries.

Elisha knew that the revelation he received was from God, so, he used it to give the woman guidance. The action of giving the woman guidance showed that Elisha cared. Do we care enough for each other? Many times, we know the right thing to do but would not guide someone who is on the wrong path to do it because we do not care enough.

Providential Timing

The Shunammite woman returned to Israel from the land of the Philistines after seven years when the famine ended. Elisha's guidance had a profound impact, demonstrating his faith in God's perfect timing. His instructions led to her timely return, coinciding with a conversation between Gehazi and the king. God's timing is the best because he puts everything in place at the right time. Elisha told the woman to leave her home and come back after seven years in order to evade the famine.

The woman did not worry much about who was going to take care of her land. She obeyed God immediately. After the famine ended, she came to ask the king to restore her house and land. When she met the king, she found Gehazi narrating her story to the king. We serve a God who knows how to connect the dots.

The phrase, "God goes before us," may sound common and we may fail to give much thought to it. God indeed goes before us, especially when we obey Him. While the woman was on the way to meet the king, she might have worried what will be the best explanation to give the king and how

she would be able to convince him. Luckily, God allowed her to travel the very same day that he allowed Gehazi to talk to the king.

The road which she might have thought to be rough was smoothened by God. Therefore, it did not take much struggle for the woman to convince the king about her house and land. That is why God tells us not to worry (Matthew 6:34). John 6:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" [6] And this he said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do." God always knows what to do. He may subject us to trial and tests but He knows what He will do.

Divine Orchestration

Elisha's influence extended to the king of Israel through Gehazi's testimony about Elisha's miracles. When the Shunammite woman approached the king, Gehazi was already recounting Elisha's miraculous deeds, including the restoration of her son's life. It was a perfect example of divine orchestration. God is in control of the universe.

The law of attraction teachings often emits the element of God from them and often points us to the universe. The reason they do this is to divert our attention from God and make us focus on another god which is the universe. The universe did not create itself and it cannot sustain itself. There is a higher power that created it and is sustaining it and that is the power of God's Word. Most teachings on the law of attraction seem sensible and seem to have some elements of truth but are not true because they have omitted God out of the picture.

Paul perfectly describes such teachings in the book of 2 Timothy. In 2 Timothy 3:5 (KJV), the Bible says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." The teachings of the law of attraction have some form of godliness (as some of the principles in them may seem true) but they are null, void, and erroneous because they deny the power of God. There is always divine orchestration from God that is working out to make the universe function the way it functions.

Genesis 1:28 (KJ21) - “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Not only is God above the universe but He has also placed us above the universe and has given us dominion over it. Thus, He calls us to subdue (conquer) it. Subdue in Hebrew also means to trample upon. We are called to trample upon the earth because we are above it. Sometimes God may allow Satan to carry out his evil work but will still make sure that at the end righteousness wins because He is a good God. For example, He may allow the Devil to trouble someone but at the end of those troubles, He brings good out of that troublesome situation. Evil may reign for a while but it cannot succeed. Righteousness always wins.

When God is in control of the ship, you need to peacefully rest because He will use His divine navigation skills to steer it perfectly and lead it to the peaceful and blissful shore. The Shunammite woman had not talked to Gehazi to talk to the king about her but God orchestrated the events that it ended up working in her favor. All this happened because she obeyed the Word of the Lord that had come through His servant Elisha.

Restoration of Property

The king, moved by Gehazi’s story and the Shunammite woman’s testimony, appointed an official to restore her property and compensate her for all the produce of the land since she left. This outcome was a direct result of Elisha’s faith in God’s promises and his actions to ensure the woman’s well-being.

Nothing is lost when one follows God faithfully. When the Shunammite woman left for the land of the Philistines for seven years she might have thought that the land she left was lost. When she came back, she found out that it was not lost. What is astonishing in this story is that she was able to gain the produce that had grown in the land when she was not there. God is not a robber. The Devil is the one who is a robber. When you go to God, He blesses you with more and He gives you what you had previously lost. When you go to Satan, He takes away everything you have, including your life.

Joel 2:25 (KJV) - "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpiller, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."

The Book of Joel addresses a time of great crisis in the land of Israel due to a severe locust plague that devastated the land, destroying crops and causing widespread famine. This catastrophe is viewed as God's judgment due to the nation's sins.

Locust, cankerworm, caterpillar, and palmerworm: These terms refer to various stages or types of destructive locusts. They symbolize complete devastation as each stage of the locust life cycle contributed to the total stripping of the land's vegetation.

Great army: This metaphorically describes the swarm of locusts as an instrument of God's judgment.

"I will restore to you the years": The promise here is exceptionally profound. God pledges to compensate for the time and produce lost during the years of devastation. This is not just about replacing the physical losses but also about spiritual renewal and restoration of hope and prosperity.

The restoration signifies God's mercy and forgiveness, highlighting His desire to renew and bless His people after a period of judgment and suffering. The broader context of Joel includes a call to repentance (Joel 2:12-13), promising that God will relent from sending calamity if the people turn back to Him with sincere hearts. The restoration is a part and parcel of the blessings that follow genuine repentance and turning to God.

For believers today, this verse serves as a reminder of God's restorative ability. No matter the losses or the damage caused by past mistakes, God can restore and bring about new and better beginnings. It underscores God's faithfulness and His desire to bless His people despite their failings. It reassures us that God's plans ultimately aim for the good of His children.

Joel 2:25 is a powerful promise of God's renewal and restoration. It speaks to His ability to redeem and restore time and blessings lost due to devastation, whether caused by external circumstances or personal failings. It calls believers to trust in God's mercy and faithfulness, encouraging repentance and reliance on His power to renew and bless abundantly.

Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) – "[29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for

My sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

God will restore everything that you have ever lost when you go back to Him. Not only will He do that, but He will also give you much more.

Impact of Faithful Ministry

Elisha's earlier miraculous act of restoring the Shunammite woman's son to life had a lasting impact beyond his comprehension. This miraculous deed, remembered and recounted by Gehazi, played a crucial role in the restoration of her land. Elisha's faith was clear in the enduring influence of his ministry and God's faithfulness in honoring his prophetic acts. As they say, "Your good deeds will always follow you."

Men may forget but God never forgets. Besides Elisha, we see the same happening with Mordecai. Mordecai did an act of kindness to King Ahasuerus also known as King Xerxes I, who was the king of Persia. The king did not know immediately that it was Mordecai who had helped him. One day, the king could not sleep. As a result, he started reading the book of the Chronicles and he realized that Mordecai was the one who uncovered a plot to assassinate the king and informed him through Queen Esther, thereby saving the king's life.

As we can see, Mordecai was not doing this righteous act to receive glory for himself. He did not bother to introduce himself to the king. Instead, he told Queen Esther who later on told the king. The king did not know that it was Mordecai who did that. When King Ahasuerus realized that Mordecai was the one who did that wonderful act to him, he was extremely delighted and sought to reward him with the best gifts.

Mordecai had probably forgotten about that little act of kindness that he did but God did not forget and when the right time came, God through King Xerxes rewarded him. The people you secretly pray for keep praying for them. The people you secretly help keep helping them. God will reward all those good deeds. He may even reveal to those people that you are the one praying for them and helping them like he revealed to King Ahasuerus concerning Mordecai.

Sometimes I see some of the people that I secretly pray for favoring me so much. They may not understand why they favor me that much but I sense it might be because I secretly pray for them. Keep in mind, not everybody you pray for and help will favor you or like you but God will undoubtedly reward you.

Being faithful to God's calling will shower you with blessings not only in your lifetime but also in your future generations. Some people may not be so good but when they introduce themselves as the grandchildren to a particular person, they get highly respected. Some have received rewards while others have evaded punishments because of the good acts of their grandparents.

In this particular story, Elisha's faith is shown through his accurate prophecy of the famine, his wise and caring guidance to the Shunammite woman, his reliance on God's timing, and the providential alignment of events that led to the restoration of her land. Elisha's actions and their outcomes demonstrate a deep trust in God's plans and a commitment to his prophetic calling.

Prophecy of Ben-Hadad's Death

2 Kings 8:7-15 (AMP) - "[7] Now Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-hadad king of Aram (Syria) was sick; and he was told, "The man of God has come here." [8] And the king said to Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this illness?'" [9] So Hazael went to meet Elisha and took a gift with him of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' loads; and he came and stood before him and said, "Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you, asking, 'Will I recover from this illness?'" [10] And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You will certainly recover,' but the Lord has shown me that he will certainly die." [11] Elisha stared steadily at Hazael until he was embarrassed, and then the man of God wept. [12] Hazael said, "Why are you weeping, my lord?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons (descendants) of Israel. You will set their strongholds on fire, kill their young men with the sword, smash their children to pieces, and rip up their pregnant women." [13] Then Hazael said, "*Surely not*! For what is your servant, *who is nothing more than* a dog, that he would do this monstrous thing?" And Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown me that you will be king over Aram." [14] Then Hazael departed from Elisha and came to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me you would certainly

recover.” [15] But the next day Hazael took the bedspread and dipped it in water and covered the king’s face, so that he died. And Hazael became king in his place.”

Elisha means “God is salvation.” Elisha’s name underscores his role as a divine instrument of deliverance and revelation. His interactions and prophecies in this passage reveal the impending judgment and future events, emphasizing that true salvation and insight come from God.

Damascus means "A well-watered land." As the capital of Aram (Syria), Damascus represents a place of power and prosperity. Elisha's presence in Damascus signifies the reach of God's prophetic word even into foreign territories, demonstrating that God's influence extends beyond Israel.

Ben-Hadad means, “Son of Hadad.” Ben-Hadad’s name reflects his association with Aramean royalty and their gods. His inquiry through Elisha indicates a recognition of the power and truth of Israel’s God over his own deities, albeit reluctantly or out of desperation due to his illness.

Aram means “exalted” or “high place.” Aram represents a nation often in conflict with Israel. The exalted status of Aram is contrasted with its dependency on a prophet of Israel for revelation and healing, highlighting God's supremacy over all nations.

Hazael means, “God sees.” Hazael’s name prophetically indicates his future role as seen by God. Despite his humble beginnings and initial reluctance, he is seen and chosen by God to fulfill a specific role in the unfolding events, including judgment against Israel.

Elisha’s Obedience to God's Revelation

Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Syria, where Ben-Hadad, the king, was sick. The fact that Elisha, a prophet of Israel, would travel to a foreign and often hostile nation shows his willingness to follow God’s direction even into potentially dangerous places.

We are only willing to follow God when it is comfortable but when asked to step out of our comfort zone, we are not willing to obey God. The more you get out of your comfort zone for God, the more blessings you shall receive. God recognizes the efforts you do for His kingdom and He can never fail to reward them. This action by Elisha underscores his obedience and trust in God's guidance. Elisha did not hesitate or question God's command, thus demonstrating his faith in God.

Prophetic Insight and Bold Declaration

In 2 Kings 8:10, when Hazael, Ben-Hadad's servant, asked if the king would recover, Elisha answered, "You will certainly recover," but then added, "the Lord has shown me that he will certainly die."

Elisha's response shows his faith in the accuracy of God's revelation. Despite the seemingly contradictory message (that the king would recover from his illness but would still die), Elisha trusted in God's ultimate plan and was bold enough to declare it before Ben Hadad's servant.

Elisha shows Empathy

In 2 Kings 8:11-12, Elisha stared at Hazael until he was embarrassed, and then he wept. When Hazael asked why, Elisha explained that he knew the evil Hazael would do to Israel. Elisha's weeping shows his deep empathy and sorrow for the future suffering of his people. His faith is evident in his acceptance of God's revelation about these events, even though they were distressing. Do we empathize with other people? If we truly did, we would go a great length in helping them.

Many times, when we hear something bad has happened to someone, we portray sad faces and utter words of sadness but deep down in our hearts, we do not feel anything. True empathy should move us to action. True empathy should move us to fast and pray for those for whom we say we care. True empathy should move us to sacrifice for the greatest benefit of those we care for.

Foretelling Hazael's Future

In 2 Kings 8:13, Elisha revealed that Hazael would become king of Aram. Despite Hazael's initial disbelief, Elisha spoke with confidence about what God had shown him. This prophecy required great faith because it meant trusting that God's plans would unfold as revealed, even when they seemed unlikely or difficult to comprehend at the moment.

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Accuracy of Prophecy

In 2 Kings 8:14-15, Hazael reported to Ben-Hadad that he would recover, but then killed him the next day, becoming king in his place. This fulfilled Elisha’s prophecy exactly. The fulfillment of the prophecy demonstrates that Elisha's faith was well-placed. He trusted in God’s Word despite the potential personal risk and the unsettling nature of the prophecy.

Elisha's faith is demonstrated in the prophecy of Ben-Hadad’s death through his unwavering obedience to God, his boldness in delivering God's message, his emotional engagement with the prophecy, and his confidence in the ultimate fulfillment of God's Word. Elisha’s actions show that he deeply trusted in God's revelations and had the courage to act upon them, even when they foretold difficult and painful events.

Anointing Hazael

2 Kings 8:7-15 (AMP) - “[7] Now Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-hadad king of Aram (Syria) was sick; and he was told, “The man of God has come here.” [8] And the king said to Hazael, “Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’” [9] So Hazael went to meet Elisha and took a gift with him of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels’ loads; and he came and stood before him and said, “Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you, asking, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’” [10] And

Elisha said to him, “Go, say to him, ‘You will certainly recover,’ but the Lord has shown me that he will certainly die.” [11] Elisha stared steadily at Hazael until he was embarrassed, and then the man of God wept. [12] Hazael said, “Why are you weeping, my lord?” He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons (descendants) of Israel. You will set their strongholds on fire, kill their young men with the sword, smash their children to pieces, and rip up their pregnant women.” [13] Then Hazael said, “*Surely not*! For what is your servant, *who is nothing more than* a dog, that he would do this monstrous thing?” And Elisha answered, “The Lord has shown me that you will be king over Aram.” [14] Then Hazael departed from Elisha and came to his master, who said to him, “What did Elisha say to you?” And he answered, “He told me you would certainly recover.” [15] But the next day Hazael took the bedspread and dipped it in water and covered the king’s face, so that he died. And Hazael became king in his place.”

Journey to Damascus

Elisha travels to the city of Damascus, which is the capital of Syria, a neighboring and often hostile nation to Israel. The journey itself shows faith and obedience to God’s direction, as Elisha moves into potentially dangerous territory, trusting in God’s protection and purpose. Elisha does not run away like Jonah did when he was sent to Nineveh. He boldly approaches the town to deliver a hard message.

Reception by Ben-Hadad

Upon Elisha’s arrival, Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, acknowledges Elisha as a "man of God" and sends Hazael with a substantial gift to inquire about his illness. Elisha’s reputation and recognition even among foreign rulers indicate his faith in carrying out his prophetic ministry consistently, gaining respect and acknowledgement from others. It is a great honor when a non-believer acknowledges one as a man of God. Are outsiders able to acknowledge that you are a Christian?

Ben-Hadad not only acknowledges Elisha as a man of God, but he also gives him great gifts and sends Hazael to ask him if he will recover. Genuine Godly people are unique, that is why Jesus calls them a peculiar people. In his sermon, *Not So*, Pastor Randy Skeete says, “We are afraid to

do what is right because doing what's right makes me look funny. But Jesus said, yes, you are a peculiar people."

Everything worldly can be done by everyone worldly. However, it takes a genuine man of God to do something unique. Elisha was a genuine man of God and he had unique abilities. That is why the king of Syria offered him a lot of gifts to tell him if he would recover or not. For a king to give someone such kind of gifts means that he truly trusts his service. There might have been other magicians and fortune tellers in the land of Syria but the king trusted Elisha because Elisha was a man of God.

Delivering God's Message with Honesty

Elisha gives a complex prophecy to Hazael. He tells Hazael to inform Ben-Hadad that he will recover, but also reveals that God has shown him Ben-Hadad will indeed die. This prophecy reflects Elisha's faith in God's revelation and his courage to convey God's message truthfully, even when it is difficult and dangerous.

Emotional Reaction and Vision

Elisha’s reaction to Hazael staring at him until he feels embarrassed and then weeping, demonstrates Elisha’s deep faith and the burdensome prophetic vision. Elisha sees the future atrocities Hazael will commit against Israel and is deeply moved by the knowledge of the suffering to come. This emotional response underscores Elisha’s faith in the visions and revelations from God, as well as his compassionate heart for his people.

Prophecy of Hazael's Kingship

Elisha prophesied that Hazael will become king of Syria. This prediction requires faith in the accuracy and inevitability of God’s revelations. Elisha understood the gravity of this prophecy, knowing that Hazael’s rise to power will bring hardship upon Israel. Yet, he faithfully delivers the message as God has revealed it to him.

Confronting Evil

By staring intently at Hazael and eventually revealing the evil he will execute, Elisha confronts Hazael with his future actions. This confrontation shows Elisha’s faith in God’s justice and his role as a prophet to not only foresee but also to communicate God’s judgments and revelations, no matter how harsh.

Endurance in Ministry

Throughout this passage, Elisha's actions reflect his staunch faith and dedication to his prophetic ministry. Despite the emotional toll and the challenging nature of the messages he must deliver, Elisha continues to serve faithfully, showing his deep commitment to God’s calling.

In this account, Elisha's faith is shown through his obedience to God’s direction, his honesty in delivering difficult prophecies, his emotional engagement with the suffering of his people, and his courage in confronting future evil. His actions demonstrate a profound trust in God's sovereignty and an unwavering commitment to his prophetic role, even in the face of personal danger and emotional distress.

Anointing Jehu

2 Kings 9:1-13 (AMP) – "[1] Now Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Gird up your loins (prepare for action), take this flask of oil in your hand and go to Ramoth-gilead. [2] When you arrive there, look for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and have him arise from among his brothers, and take him into an inner room. [3] Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, 'Thus says the Lord: "I have anointed you king over Israel."' Then open the door and flee and do not delay." [4] So the young man, the servant

of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. [5] When he arrived, the captains of the army were sitting [outside]; and he said, “I have a message for you, O captain.” Jehu said, “To which one of us?” And he said, “For you, O captain.” [6] So Jehu got up, and they went into the house. And he poured the oil on Jehu’s head and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. [7] You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, [who have died] at the hands of Jezebel. [8] For the entire house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free, in Israel. [9] I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. [10] And the dogs will eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and there will be no one to bury her.’” Then he opened the door and fled. [11] When Jehu came out to the servants of his master, one said to him, “Is all well? Why did this madman come to you?” And he said to them, “You know [very well] the man and his talk.” [12] And they said, “It is a lie; tell us now.” And he said, “Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “I have anointed you king over Israel.”’” [13] Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it [as a cushion] under Jehu on the top of the [outside] stairs, and blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”

Ramoth-Gilead means "Heights of Gilead." This strategic military site, located in the territory of Gad on the east side of the Jordan River, was often contested between Israel and Aram (Syria). It is where Jehu is anointed as king, marking a crucial location for this significant event. Jezreel means "God sows." Jezreel was a city in the northern kingdom of Israel, associated with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel’s royal residence. Its mention underscores the fulfillment of God's prophecy concerning Jezebel’s death, highlighting divine retribution.

Elisha means "God is salvation." As a major prophet in Israel and successor to Elijah, Elisha's role is pivotal in initiating Jehu’s anointing. His actions are a direct response to God’s command to change Israel's leadership and execute judgment on Ahab’s house. Jehu means "Jehovah is He." Jehu is anointed as the new king of Israel. His mission is to carry out God’s judgment against Ahab’s house, especially targeting Jezebel, who led Israel into idolatry and persecuted God's prophets.

Jehoshaphat means "The Lord judges." As Jehu’s father, Jehoshaphat’s name emphasizes the divine judgment theme. It signifies the lineage through which God’s judgment will be enacted.

The name Nimshi is not definitively understood, but it might derive from a root meaning "rescued" or "freed." Nimshi is Jehu's grandfather, providing a genealogical context that links Jehu to a legacy of deliverance and freedom, aligning with his role in liberating Israel from Ahab's corrupt rule.

Ahab means "Father's brother." Ahab was a notorious king of Israel known for his idolatry and his wife Jezebel's evil actions. Mentioning his house underscores the impending judgment for his sins and the purging of his corrupt legacy. Jezebel means "Not exalted" or "Without cohabitation." Jezebel, Ahab's queen, is infamous for promoting Baal worship and persecuting God's prophets. Her name's meaning reflects her eventual downfall and the lack of honor she receives. Her death fulfills Elijah's prophecy, signifying divine retribution.

Jeroboam means "The people contend" (Jeroboam) and "Aspect" or "regard" (Nebat). Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, known for leading Israel into idolatry. His mention sets a precedent for divine judgment, paralleling Ahab's sins and foreshadowing similar consequences for Ahab's house.

Baasha means "Boldness" or "Offense" and Ahijah means "Brother of Jehovah". Baasha, another idolatrous king of Israel, experienced divine judgment. His mention reinforces the theme of divine retribution, emphasizing the inevitability of God's judgment against persistent sin.

Obedience to God's Command

Elisha receives a directive from God to anoint Jehu as king over Israel. This is a critical and potentially dangerous mission, as it involves overturning the current dynasty of King Joram, a descendant of Ahab. Despite the inherent risks, Elisha obeys God's command without hesitation, showing his unwavering faith in God's plan and protection.

Delegating with Confidence

Elisha calls one of the sons of the prophets and commands him to carry out the anointing of Jehu. This act of delegation shows Elisha's faith in God's authority and in the prophetic community he

leads. He trusts that the young prophet will successfully complete the mission, indicating his confidence in God's guidance and support. Christian leaders should love to delegate duties.

Delegation relieves the burden of someone's shoulders and it makes one to do more than he usually does. For instance, when you delegate, you are able to find time to do something else that is within your purpose or calling. As a result, you end up doing more and serving more people.

When you delegate the work in accordance to someone's gifts, passions, skills and abilities, you are able to produce more quality work. This is because the person you have handed that job to is a specialist and they are able to do something of better quality than you could have done.

I delegate my software development, web development and mobile application development work to developers who are specialists and who have great passion in it. That is why I am able to find time to write Christian material. That ends up increasing the number of people I serve. There is beauty in collaboration and one effective way to collaborate is through delegation.

Providing Specific Instructions

Elisha gives the young prophet detailed instructions on what to do: "Gird up your loins, take this flask of oil, go to Ramoth-gilead, find Jehu, take him into an inner room, anoint him, deliver God's message, and then flee." These precise steps demonstrate Elisha's faith in God's strategic plan and his understanding of the importance of following divine instructions to the letter.

Often, people are usually vague in their instructions. Vague instructions result in vague work quality. As a leader, you get upset when you receive low quality work while you were the one who did not give clear instructions. There are people who can bring out a masterpiece even when the instructions are vague but those are very few people. Majority of the people require crystal clear and easy to understand instructions for them to do a crème de la crème kind of work.

Our instructions as leaders ought to be very specific. Unfortunately, that is where we go wrong as men. Men naturally don't talk much and if they do, they don't talk things in details. Men are more interested in the general idea than in the specific details of the work. Ladies on the other hand, generally love explaining things to the smallest details.

I remember one day, in the Adventurers club in Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church we were welcoming new teachers who were joining the club. While welcoming them, each female colleague gave a good welcoming speech. Since I was the only male teacher available at that particular moment, Brenda, the club director told me (and I'm paraphrasing), "Alex, welcome them, so that at least they get to hear a male voice." I said, "Welcome" and that was the end of my speech. They all burst into laughter.

When I was younger and my mother would give me instructions as she is sending me to the shops to go and buy, she would explain why I should buy each item she sent. In my mind, I would wonder when that long speech was going to end because I was trying to pick out the main points or ideas. Not all men are like that but many of them are like that. Now that it is not naturally in you to give details as man, what should you do? You cannot change yourself from being a man to a lady but you can unlearn the bad habits and learn better new habits.

Genesis 2:18 (AMP) - "Now the Lord God said, It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable and complementary for him."

God saw that man needs a person to complement him and that is why He made a woman. One way she can assist you is in giving the details while you provide the main ideas. When you are looking for someone to assist you in communicating the main ideas in details, a lady will be the most preferable choice.

Bold Proclamation of God's Judgment

The message Elisha gives to Jehu through the young prophet is one of judgment and significant change. Anointing Jehu as king involves pronouncing God's judgment on the house of Ahab and Jezebel. Elisha's faith is evident in his willingness to deliver such a bold and severe prophecy, trusting that it is God's will and that God will bring it to pass.

Prophetic Accuracy and Assurance

Elisha's prophecy is detailed and specific: the complete destruction of Ahab's house, the avenging of the blood of God's servants, and the gruesome death of Jezebel. The accuracy and assurance with which Elisha delivered this prophecy reflect his deep faith in God's Word and his prophetic calling. He knows that what he says is not his own words but those of God.

Immediate Obedience and Urgency

The son of the prophet follows Elisha's instructions immediately, showing the urgency and importance Elisha placed on this mission. This sense of urgency reflects Elisha's faith in the critical timing of God's plans and his commitment to ensuring they are carried out without delay.

Triggering Immediate Action and Acceptance

Upon hearing the prophecy, Jehu and his companions do not question or delay. They immediately acknowledge Jehu as king and begin to act on the prophecy. This swift acceptance and action demonstrate the power and authority behind Elisha's words, indicating his faith in the compelling truth of God's message.

Instilling Confidence and Leadership in Others

By sending the son of the prophet and ensuring the mission is carried out successfully, Elisha empowers and instills confidence in the next generation of prophets. This act of mentorship and trust in others shows Elisha's faith in God's continuing work through his prophetic ministry and the prophetic community.

When we ask those who are willing to assist us in doing the work God has called us to do, we give them an opportunity to use their gifts and to sharpen them. Idle gifts are like stagnant waters that have no inflow or outflow; thus, they keep on getting dirty. Kelly Inspiration says, "Anything that is not used deteriorates." How can we make sure that our gifts do not deteriorate? Using them is the best way to ensure that our gifts do not deteriorate.

We should be our brother's keeper. We should take interest in other people's needs as much as we do to our own needs. One way of doing that is to help others in sharpening their gifts. The best way to do that is by giving people tasks to sharpen their gifts. Make sure you have left someone better than the way they were before you met them. Elijah instilled confidence in Elisha by giving him the opportunity to follow him and assist him. Elisha instilled confidence in the son of the prophet by giving him the opportunity to assist him in the great work of anointing a king.

Elisha's faith in the anointing of Jehu's story is multifaceted: it involves personal obedience to God's commands, confidence in God's protection and plans, precise and bold delivery of prophetic messages to people, and effective delegation that empowers others to fulfill God's purposes. Each aspect of this account highlights Elisha's deep and unwavering trust in God's sovereignty and faithfulness.

Prophesying Israel's Victory over Aram

2 Kings 13:14-19 (AMP) – "[14] Now Elisha had become sick with the illness by which he would die. And Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" [15] And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. [16] Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." And he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. [17] And he said, "Open the window to the east," and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" And he shot. And Elisha said, "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram (Syria); for you will strike the Arameans in Aphek until you have destroyed them." [18] Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck *it* three times and stopped. [19] So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times.""

In 2 Kings 13:14-19, Elisha's faith is shown through several key actions and words:

Prophetic Insight

Despite his illness and impending death, Elisha continues to exercise his prophetic gift. He understands the significance of the moment and the actions he is instructing King Joash to perform. This demonstrates his unwavering faith in God's ability to reveal and fulfill His plans through acts of faith.

Symbolic Actions

Elisha directs King Joash to perform specific symbolic actions (taking a bow and arrows, opening the window, shooting, and striking the ground). These actions are meant to convey God's will and promise of victory over the Arameans. Elisha's faith in God's power and in the significance of these prophetic symbols is evident.

Declaration of God's Promise

When Joash shoots the arrow, Elisha declares it as "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram." This shows Elisha's faith in God's promise of deliverance and victory, confident that God will bring it to pass as He has declared.

Limitless Obedience

Elisha instructs Joash to strike the ground with the arrows. When Joash stops after striking three times, Elisha becomes angry because Joash's actions reflect a lack of complete faith and zeal. Elisha expected Joash to act with more fervor, showing his own understanding of the need for wholehearted faith and action to fully receive God's promises.

2 Kings 13:19 (AMP) – “So the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times.””

Elisha did not tell Joash how many times to strike the ground. Joash chose to strike the ground only three times. Elisha was angry with Joash because Joash limited himself. God gets angry with

you when you limit yourself. Joash struck the ground only three times when he should have struck it five or six times. Like Elisha, God does not give you a limit on how you should use your gifts to serve Him. He just tells you to use it.

Elisha did not tell Joash that he has sinned and he is doomed. Instead, he told him that he should have done more than he did. He assured him that if he did more, he would have gained greater victory over the Arameans. If you use your gift more than you currently have, you will get more blessings than you currently have.

The blessings that you have currently gotten from your gift can be increased if you use your gift more. When you have done something righteous, always ask yourself, is that all you can do? If not, what more can you do? Many are stuck where they are because of yesterday's success. Someone may say, "Last year, I impacted a billion people," unfortunately, he may live the rest of his life recounting that legacy. It is good that yesterday you impacted a billion people but that is not the entire population of the world. You still have a duty before God to impact more.

Persistence in Faith

Even as he is on his deathbed, Elisha remains focused on his role as a prophet and the welfare of Israel. His faith does not waver due to his personal circumstances, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to God's work and promises.

Psalm 117:1-2 (KJV) - "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people."

The Bible calls upon us all to praise God. People from all nations ought to praise God as long as they are alive. This call excludes no one. Everyone, whether poor or rich, whether sick or healthy, whether unconscious or conscious, whether disabled or able should praise God because the life they are having is from God.

Sickness should not stop you from doing what you are called to do and what you can do for God. Disability should not stop you. Lack of freedom should not stop you. Nothing should stop you, only death. Elisha was sick to the point of dying but he still served God.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV) - "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

We owe our lives to God. We are on earth and we are alive to carry out our duty which is to obey God. We obey God by following His direction in our purpose. We should not fail to praise God using our various gifts because we are tired or we are not feeling like it. We should praise God all the time. Using our gifts for the glory of God is thanking Him for giving them to us.

Overall, Elisha's faith is shown through his continued prophetic ministry despite his illness, his confidence in God's promises, his use of symbolic acts to convey God's will, and his expectation of complete faith and obedience from those he instructs.

On his deathbed, Elisha instructs King Joash of Israel to shoot arrows and strike the ground, symbolizing future victories over Aram.

Elisha's Death and Posthumous Miracle

2 Kings 13:20-21 (AMP) – "[20] Elisha died, and they buried him. Now marauding bands of Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year. [21] And it happened that as a man was being buried [on an open bier], they saw a marauding band [coming]; and they threw the man into Elisha's grave. But when the [body of the] man [was being let down and] touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet."

In 2 Kings 13:20-21, Elisha's faith is conveyed through his posthumous miracle:

Enduring Influence of Faith

Elisha's faith and connection with the Lord were so profound that even after his death, his bones carried the power to perform a miracle. This suggests that his life was filled with such faith and anointing that God's power remained with him even in death. As a child of God, your work may stop after you die but your influence should not be stopped by death. Elisha was still powerful and influential even after he died. Like all the faithful people in the Bible and outside the Bible, God wants His chosen people to leave a legacy behind.

Musicians and other famous people are given lifetime achievement awards posthumously. This is because people still listen to their songs and their influence is still felt. We still read the books of the Bible which were written thousands of years ago. Elisha, who lived thousands of years ago, is able to impact us today through his story. God is everlasting. He has no end and He has given us the privilege of having a righteous influence that has no end.

Legacy of God's Power

The miracle of a dead man coming back to life upon touching Elisha's bones demonstrates the enduring nature of God's power through a faithful servant. Elisha's faith in life left a legacy that continued to testify to God's miraculous power even after his death.

Testimony to Others

This miracle served as a powerful testament to those who witnessed it. The revival of the dead man upon touching Elisha's bones would have been a profound sign to the people of the continuing power and presence of God, further underscoring the faithfulness of Elisha throughout his life.

While Elisha's faith is not actively demonstrated in his own actions in this specific passage (since it occurs after his death), the miracle itself is a direct result of the life of faith he led. His close relationship with God and the anointing he carried were so significant that they continued to

manifest God's power even after he had passed away. This highlights the depth and impact of Elisha's faith during his lifetime.

Conclusion

Elisha's life exemplifies devoted faith and steadfast dedication to God's will. Through miraculous acts and prophetic insight, he demonstrated profound trust in God's power and guidance. Elisha's journey inspires us to embrace faithfulness, courage, and obedience, knowing that God is faithful to fulfill His promises and work through those who earnestly seek Him. His legacy challenges us to live boldly for God, trusting in His provision and sovereignty in every circumstance.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, forgive me for all the sins that I have done. Thank You for the example of Elisha's faith and dedication. Help me to leave behind anything that holds me back from fully following You. Grant me determination, commitment, and loyalty to Your will. Teach me to seek Your spiritual blessings, trust Your timing, and humbly recognize my needs.

May I be faithful in small tasks, persistent in Your purpose, and confident in Your provision. Guide me to instill leadership in others. Guide me on how to use the gifts that You have given me. Give me knowledge of Your Word and discernment that I may always know when to say yes to Your commandments and no to what leads me away from You. Restore me in every area and make me willing to take on greater responsibilities for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Reflect on one habit, distraction, or mindset holding you back from fully following God. Write it down, pray about it, and make a commitment to leave it behind, just as Elisha left his plow to follow Elijah.

2. Perform acts of kindness or service anonymously. This will help build humility and encourage faithfulness in small things.
3. Dedicate time to pray for a multiplied portion of spiritual blessings in areas where you feel weak. Read 2 Kings 2:9 for inspiration.
4. Volunteer for a task at work, church, or within your community that requires commitment and effort. Trust God to equip you for greater responsibilities.
5. Make a list of things you will say yes to (aligned with God's commandments) and things you need to say no to (distractions, laziness, or ungodly influences). Actively practice this throughout the day.
6. Think of someone you can mentor or delegate a task to. Teach them with the same confidence and trust Elijah showed Elisha, instilling leadership in others.
7. Write down how you have seen God guide you through this journey. Celebrate by thanking Him for abundance and restoration in your life.

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CHAPTER 67

THE FAITH OF PROPHET ISAIAH

Isaiah, known as the prophet of the gospel,

A message to keep us from Satan's evil spell,

Freely he gave, he did not sale,

To heal the broken hearted, to free captives from the Devil's cell.

The Lord saves through His Word,

His Word makes our minds pure, keep us from running mad,

The Lord gladens, keeps us from feeling sad,

Believe in Jesus, who paid a ransom with His blood.

Lord, assure me of Your presence,

Lord, the One who created, the One who sustains,

Lord, teach me all the needed lessons,

Lord, thank You for giving me good and perfect presents.

Here I am, Lord send me,

Here I am, Lord set me free,

Here I am, Lord open my eyes to see,

Here I am, Lord calm the stormy sea.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Background of Isaiah

Isaiah’s nickname is the Gospel Prophet because he is well known for predicting the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaiah in Hebrew is יְשַׁעְיָהוּ (Yeshayahu). Isaiah means "Yahweh is salvation" or "The Lord is salvation." The meaning of his name closely aligns with his work of prophesying about Jesus Christ, the Savior. He is categorized among the major prophets in the Old Testament. His ministry spanned the reigns of four Judean kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (approximately 740-700 BC). Isaiah is often regarded as one of the greatest prophets due to his profound and far-reaching prophecies concerning the future of Israel, the coming of the Messiah, and the ultimate redemption of humanity.

Historical Context

Political Landscape: During Isaiah's time, Judah faced significant political turmoil. The northern kingdom of Israel was on the brink of destruction by the Assyrian Empire, and Judah was under constant threat from powerful neighbors.

Spiritual Climate: The people of Judah were struggling with idolatry, social injustice, and a superficial religiosity. Isaiah called for repentance and a return to genuine worship of Yahweh.

Assyrian Threat: The looming threat of the Assyrian Empire, which eventually conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, influenced much of Isaiah's prophecies. Isaiah warned Judah of impending judgment if they did not turn back to God, but also offered hope of restoration and redemption.

Structure of the Book of Isaiah

Chapters 1-39: Often referred to as "First Isaiah," these chapters focus on warnings of judgment against Judah and other nations, calls for repentance, and prophecies about the coming Messiah.

Chapters 40-55: Known as "Deutero-Isaiah," these chapters shift to messages of comfort and hope for the future, emphasizing the return from Babylonian exile and the coming of God's servant.

Chapters 56-66: "Trito-Isaiah" contains prophecies about the future glory of Jerusalem, the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan, and the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.

Isaiah, as a prophet, fits within the group mentioned in Hebrews 11:32 ("...and of the prophets"). He is one of those who, through faith, proclaimed God's Word and foretold the coming salvation. Isaiah's prophecies often called for faith amidst adversity.

For instance, he foretold the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7), which required faith to believe during a time of national turmoil. Hebrews 11:33-35 speaks of those who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises." Isaiah's prophecies often encouraged the people to maintain hope and faith in God's promises, such as the eventual deliverance from Babylonian exile and the coming of the Messiah.

The references to miraculous deliverance (e.g., "stopped the mouths of lions," "quenched the violence of fire") parallel the kinds of divine interventions Isaiah prophesied, like God's protection over Jerusalem from Assyrian invasion (Isaiah 37).

Isaiah's ministry took place during a time of political and spiritual crisis in Judah. He prophesied judgment against sin but also offered profound hope for future redemption through the coming Messiah. Hebrews 11:32-35 connects to Isaiah by highlighting the faith of prophets like him who proclaimed God's promises and trusted in His deliverance, despite facing immense challenges. Through faith, these prophets, including Isaiah, contributed to the unfolding of God's redemptive plan, culminating in the coming of Christ.

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Isaiah Responded to God’s Open Call

Isaiah 6:8 (KJV) - "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Isaiah responded to God's call to be a prophet with faith and readiness. During fellowship i.e., a Bible class session, I have often seen this among teenagers and adults, people are usually hesitant when an open call is made for someone to pray or to contribute to the discussion.

When I teach children and pose the question, “Who wants to pray for us.” Almost all the kids lift up their hands, ready and eager to offer their supplications to God. Sometimes it is like a competition. The same happens when you ask a question. Often times, children do not care much whether they have the right answer or not. They will lift up their hands and give you whatever answer they have. They have no fear of appearing to be wrong. They are humble enough to make mistakes (even public ones) and be corrected publicly.

Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is for people who are like little children. The kingdom of heaven is for people who do not fear making mistakes in the line of service to God and are humble enough to get corrected. That is why it is easier to learn something (like a skill) as a child than as an adult even though as an adult you are more physically developed than you are as a child. It is easier to correct a bad habit in a child than it is to correct a bad habit in an adult.

When called to pray, teenagers and adults are often self-conscious. Some do not want to look like they talk too much. Some are afraid that they are not fluent in the language being spoken. There are very many issues that saturate the minds of people above the age of thirteen. The same happens when such are called upon to answer questions in a Bible study session or to serve.

Due to that, I adopted a new strategy. I realized that when I ask, “Who wants to pray?” No one raises their hands. I chose to twist the question and ask, “Who does not want to pray?” Obviously, no one will raise their hand. Therefore, I will pick one from among those who have not raised up their hands and tell them, “Thanks for volunteering, come pray for us.” This is because by not raising up their hand (to the call of who does not want to pray), it means they want to pray.

There are some prophets who God called directly to serve Him. For example, Samuel and Jeremiah. Isaiah’s call was not so direct. God made an open call and asked, “Whom shall I send, and who

will go for us? (Isaiah 6:8)" Isaiah responded and said, "Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6:8)." I often tell the people I teach that it is a blessing when you respond like that to an open call. I tell them that it is a blessing when you agree to pray when a suggestion is made for anyone in the group to volunteer and pray. It is a blessing to volunteer to answer a question, even if your answer is wrong. It is a blessing to volunteer to serve God when an open call is made.

It is a blessing when someone calls you directly to do something for God but it is more blessed when you respond to an invitation that is not directly made to you. This is because when you respond to an open invitation to serve God, it shows that you are more willing to do it than when someone directly tells you to do something.

Let me make this clear. When someone sends you in church to do something righteous, you may go because you do not want to appear like a bad person and spoil relations since that person is elderly or they have a certain authority. You will do whatever they have told you to even though it is not in your heart to do it. However, when someone makes an open call and asks for someone to volunteer to do something and you volunteer, it shows that you are more willing than the one who has been sent. This is because no one has forced you or told you directly.

I never understood how important it is for a student to participate until I became a teacher (in church). As a teacher, I would like to know if the students have understood what I have taught them. I would like to know if the students are concentrating in class (because some of them love day dreaming). So, I ask questions to engage them and to make them feel that they are part of the class. When teaching teenagers and adults, people will seldom raise their hands to answer even though they know the correct answer. So, when I see a few hands raised, it touches my heart in a special way.

I missed an assessment test in University because I arrived late. I went to my lecturer, Dr. Ella Dashanaba King and asked if I could do it again. She refused and told me it is not possible to do a test that has already been done. But I can make up for it. I asked her how I could make up for it. She told me the best way to make up for it is by participating in class. Since she was not very familiar with me at that time, I asked her how she would know that I had participated. She responded, "I'll know because not very many people do (participate)."

The students who participate in class have a special place in the teacher's heart and this may lead to the teachers favoring them. Now, when the teacher favors them, other students may start feeling bad and envious. The students who feel envious do not realize that the ones being favored are not being favored for nothing, they are being favored because of their actions. Participating in class is a blessing because it makes the teacher know you better.

Teachers may not know the names of everybody in class, but they know the names of the ones who participate. Participating in class can make a teacher have you in their prayers and it can make them to be more than willing to go extra miles to help you. Yes, the teacher will help the entire class by standing in front of the class and teaching everybody. However, he or she will go to great lengths to help those who participate or those who engage them more than they will for the rest of the class.

God functions the same way. He blesses everyone (Matthew 5:45) but gives special favors to the few who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). When we see God favoring some people, we start feeling jealous. We need not feel jealous. Instead of feeling envious, we should obey and do the righteous actions that He has told us to do and go the extra mile and do even that righteous thing that no one has told us to do. Like Isaiah, we should say, "Here I am, send me."

Prophecy of the Messiah

Isaiah 7:14 (KJV) - "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Prophet Isaiah is nicknamed the gospel Prophet because he is widely known for prophesying the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was with God even before the beginning. However, he was to be born of a human mother so that He can redeem us from the chains and the prisons of sin and to restore all that we lost as a result of sin. The mother to give birth to him was to be a virgin symbolizing that she needed to be undefiled. One reason is that God did not want any man to take the glory of using his seed to give birth to the Son of God.

Therefore, Jesus was placed in His mother's womb by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah prophesied this and he prophesied that the messiah to be born shall be called Immanuel. Immanuel means 'God with

us.' Being God, Jesus also partook our human nature and faced trials, temptations, and affliction like we do. He led by example by living a fully righteous life despite all the afflictions He faced. Isaiah got the opportunity to prophesy of this wondrous event, which is the second coming of Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6 (KJV) - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah, emphasizing His divine nature. He said that the government will be on the shoulder of Jesus. He also added that Jesus will be called, Wonderful Counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor. He is the best person to go to for advice. Jesus is the Word (John 1:1, John 1:14). Therefore, the best place to get advice is from the Word of God (the Bible). Jesus is a mighty God; He can do all things. Jesus is the everlasting Father; He cares for you and me. Jesus is the Prince of Peace; when you need peace in your soul, go to Him. In His ministry on earth, Jesus fulfilled all these. He still fulfills it now.

Isaiah 11:1-2 (KJV) - "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;"

Isaiah also prophesied that Jesus would come from the lineage of Jesse. He prophesied that the spirit of God shall rest upon Him. The phrase "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him" from Isaiah 11:2 in the original Hebrew uses the word "נָחָה" (nāḥāh) for "rest." This verb can be translated to mean "to rest," "to settle down," or "to remain." In the context of Isaiah 11:2, "rest" implies a permanent, abiding presence of the Spirit of the Lord on the Messiah. This means that God's Spirit would permanently abide in Jesus. Ask God to make the Holy Spirit permanently abide in you.

When God's Spirit abides in you, you will have wisdom and understanding because the Holy Spirit is a spirit of wisdom and understanding. When the Holy Spirit abides in you, you shall always have counsel even in matters that you are inexperienced in. King Solomon had counsel in matters he had inexperience in. For example, the story of two conflicting mothers who went to him, each claiming the child was theirs (1 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon had not experienced that situation before.

When the Spirit of God abides in you, you will have might. The Bible calls upon us to do whatever our hand finds to do with our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). How can we do what God has told us to do with our might? We can do that when we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us because He is the Spirit of might.

In His Sermon, "How to Succeed without being a Genius," Pastor Randy Skeete mentions, doing things with your might as one of the principles of success referencing Ecclesiastes 9:10. The Holy Spirit enables you to do things with supernatural might which will lead you to success. When God's spirit came upon Samson, he tore a lion like a young goat (Judges 14:6).

When the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you shall do things that seem so difficult to men as if they are so easy. Moses died at the old age of one hundred and twenty years. Normally, someone who is one hundred and twenty years old is often very weak. The Bible says that Moses was still very strong at one hundred and twenty years. Why? Because the Spirit of God abode in him.

The spirit of God is also a spirit of knowledge. Knowledge is the accumulation of truth. The Holy Spirit is meant to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). God wants you to gain knowledge in all areas of life. God wants you to get knowledge that is beyond what is important to you so that you can help others who might find that knowledge important to them.

Jesus had that knowledge, which is why He was able to give advice to married people while on this earth even though He was not married. He was able to impart knowledge to people even in matters that seemed beyond His scope. This is because the Holy Spirit, which is a spirit of knowledge, rested upon Him. The Holy Spirit is the best teacher, we should let Him teach us.

When the Holy Spirit rests on you, He will impart to you the spirit of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all good things, for example, wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10). The fear of God is to shun evil (Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 16:6, Proverbs 3:7). Many people struggle to stay away from evil. We do not need to struggle. Instead, we should invite the Holy Spirit to permanently abide in us so that He can instill in us the fear of the Lord and write the law on our hearts.

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would have the Holy Spirit rest in Him. The Spirit would enable him to have wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. O how great

a blessing it is to have all these divine qualities resident inside you. So, invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and you will be a blessing to all those around you.

Isaiah 53:3-5 (KJV) - "[3] He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. [4] Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [5] But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus was going to be despised and rejected by men. Despite the great work Christ would do, He would not be esteemed. People responded to the perfect love of Jesus with perfect hate. They despised all the good things that He did and we still despise it when we willfully and arrogantly engage in sin. Christ was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves (The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White). However, we care less about that and keep on inflicting pain on Him when we sin. In Isaiah 53:3-5, Isaiah prophesied of the afflictions that Jesus would face.

Some of the Israelites were waiting for a glorious king with royal robes to come as a messiah and to physically conquer the nation that were causing them pain and sorrows. Such people had not read and understood that Jesus, the Messiah, was going to face adversity. He would face worse problems than all human beings combined, past, present, and future. Jesus faced more trouble than all because He was fully perfect while facing those troubles, while none of us are fully perfect.

Isaiah 53:4 (KJV) - "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30 (KJ21) - "[28] Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Isaiah 61:1 (KJV) - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;"

Jesus was sent by God to preach good tidings to the meek. The meek are the ones who are humble enough to hear, to learn and to apply what they have been taught. Jesus was sent to bind up the brokenhearted. Jesus was sent to comfort us of our sorrows. The best person to go to when you are feeling sad and blue is Jesus.

As the rest of us may tell you, “I know how you feel,” we do not really know how you feel because we are not you. Some of us may feel like we understand you but we do not fully understand you. Jesus knows how you feel and He totally understands you. Jesus was sent to proclaim liberty to the captives. Satan has held very many people in the captivity of sin. Jesus came to set the captives free and He makes people free through His Word which is truth (John 8:32).

The privilege of prophesying the coming of the Messiah was such a blessed privilege. Isaiah got that privilege by responding to God’s open call when he said, “Here I am, send me (Isaiah 6:8).”

Assurance of God's Presence

Isaiah 41:10 (KJV) - "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

Isaiah conveyed God's promise of presence and protection to those who trust in Him. Through Isaiah and through His other servants, God tells us not to fear. What reason does God give of not fearing? He gives only one reason. The reason is, He is with us. When God is by your side, you shall overcome everything. God promises to strengthen us, to help us and to uphold us with the right hand of His righteousness.

Comforting Israel

Isaiah 40:1-2 (KJV) - "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."

Isaiah brought words of comfort to the people of Israel, assuring them of God's redemption. As a child of God, you should always have a word of comfort on your lips. Preach the truth but preach it in a comforting way. Be gentle with people. Do not be harsh on them to a point that you will

make them fear the Gospel. The Word of God should be obeyed from a spirit of love, and not because of compulsion or fear. We are to instill this spirit of love through comforting people.

When someone approaches you with a sin that they have committed, do not act like you are shocked. Do not insist on digging beyond what they are willing to tell you. After listening to them, start by giving words of comfort. Make them feel at ease around you and put an atmosphere around you that will make them to freely open up. You can share your past and present struggles with them as a way of giving them comfort. After you have comforted them, lead them to the truth.

“Impatience Produces a Baleful Harvest—What harm is wrought in the family circle by the utterance of impatient words, for the impatient utterance of one leads another to retort in the same spirit and manner. Then come words of retaliation, words of self-justification, and it is by such words that a heavy, galling yoke is manufactured for your neck; for all these bitter words will come back in a baleful harvest to your soul.” — The Review and Herald, February 27, 1913., Ellen G. White.

“Hard words beat upon the heart through the ear, awakening to life the worst passions of the soul and tempting men and women to break God's commandments.… Words are as seeds which are planted.” — Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, Page 518.2, Ellen G. White.

“Among the members of many families there is practiced the habit of saying loose, careless things; and the habit of tantalizing, of speaking harsh words, becomes stronger and stronger as it is indulged, and thus many objectionable words are spoken that are after Satan's order and not after the order of God.... Burning words of passion should never be spoken, for in the sight of God and holy angels they are as a species of swearing.” — The Adventist Home, Page 439, Ellen G. White.

Invitation to Seek the Lord

Isaiah 55:6 (KJV) - "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."

Isaiah encouraged people to seek the Lord and turn to Him for forgiveness. When probation closes on someone, that person has no other chance to seek the Lord. When you die in sin, you have no other chance to seek God. When Jesus comes back and finds you still in sin, you have no chance

to repent. Therefore, seek the Lord now, while He may be found. Call upon Him when He is near. In other words, make use of the available opportunities now before they are gone.

Make good use of your pastors and teachers before they are gone. They are human beings. They may die or travel to some other place. Thus, going away with the blessings that they were given by God to impart to you. Preach the gospel to your neighbor (your neighbor means everyone) while they are still within your reach. Do your best to ensure that you get all the blessings that God has placed upon your way. Be a blessing to everyone that God has placed along your way. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

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Promise of Renewed Strength

Isaiah 40:31 (KJV) - "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Isaiah spoke about the renewal of strength for those who trust in the Lord. Matthew 11:28 (KJ21) - "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." God gives rest to all those who go to Him. True rest can only be found in God. As He gives you rest, He renews your strength. You will fly like an eagle.

Eagles are used in this text because they are among the birds that fly the highest. The golden eagle has been recorded flying at altitudes of around 10,000 feet (3,000 meters). The bald eagle typically flies at lower altitudes, around 1,000 to 3,000 feet (300 to 900 meters), but can soar higher if needed. Eagles have powerful wings with a large surface area that allows them to generate lift efficiently. Their wings are designed for soaring, enabling them to ride thermal currents and glide long distances without much flapping.

Eagles possess some of the best vision in the animal kingdom. Their keen eyesight allows them to spot prey and navigate from high altitudes. Eagles have lightweight, hollow bones that reduce their overall body weight without sacrificing strength. This adaptation makes it easier for them to stay aloft. Eagles have strong flight muscles, particularly in their chest and shoulders. These muscles provide the power needed for initial takeoff and sustained flight.

Eagles are well adapted to fly at high altitudes. God who created the high-flying eagles has the ability to make you fly high in your life as well. When He renews your strength as you rest in Him, you will not just walk. You will not just fly. You will fly high like eagles. In other words, your flight will be among the highest, if not the highest. Like eagles, God will give you the adaptability to generate lift efficiently and to properly handle that high altitude.

Some people are unable to handle success once they get it. Instead of handling success, success handles them. They do not have the adaptability to fly at high altitudes. So, it does not take long before they fall to the ground. Eagles glide long distances without much flapping. God will make you glide long distances without much difficult work.

The sufficient grace of God will enable you to produce more and have great achievements in a short time. Work that you once viewed as too much will appear to be so little and easy because the Spirit of God is resident in you. Eagles are among the animals with the best vision in the animal kingdom. As He renews your strength, God will give you the best vision and you will be able to spot opportunities for blessings from a long distance. When you rest after working out your muscles in the gym, your muscles increase, and your strength increases. When God renews your strength, He increases it. Therefore, He promises that you shall walk and run and never get tired.

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Prediction of a New Heaven and Earth

Isaiah 65:17 (KJV) - "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

Isaiah prophesied about a future where God would create a new heaven and a new earth. This will happen after the second coming of Jesus when God creates a new heaven and a new earth devoid of sin. Isaiah not only prophesied about the first coming of Jesus, but he also prophesied of events that will happen after the second coming of Jesus.

Isaiah lived around seven hundred years before Jesus' first coming. Therefore, in relation to the time he lived, we see that Jesus' first coming was in the far future. He prophesied about events that will happen after Jesus' second coming. Jesus died over 2,000 years ago and He has not yet come back. We are still awaiting His second coming. This shows that God had given Isaiah incredible foresight.

When you stay close to God, He will give you incredible foresight. You will be able to accurately predict forthcoming events. People risk a lot even in business because they do not know how events will turn out. God is there to eliminate the risk. He wants you to know things concerning the future. As He eliminates the risks that you face, the path to success becomes uncluttered. Therefore, you will be able to know the right path to take in everything that you do.

Other verses speaking of new heaven and new earth:

Isaiah 66:22 (KJ21) - "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me," saith the Lord, "so shall your seed and your name remain."

2 Peter 3:13 (KJ21) - "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Revelation 21:1 (KJ21) - "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no more sea."

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Call to Walk in the Light of the Lord

Isaiah 2:5 (KJV) - "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Isaiah urged people to walk in the light of the Lord and turn away from darkness. The light of the Lord is extremely bright. It has not been dimmed even a single bit. Therefore, we do injustice to God’s light when we try to dim it by preaching half-truths. We should preach the entire truth. Isaiah did that. He prophesied about the Messiah, invited people to seek God, comforted people and told them of God’s promises.

Isaiah also preached about fasting. I have sometimes heard some preachers erroneously say that fasting is not that important. Fasting is very important and it should be done by every Christian. Fasting helps in weakening the flesh and strengthening the spirit. Majority of Christian preachers shy away from preaching about the Sabbath. The church is weak because majority of the Christian community do not keep it.

People of the World (not God) shifted God's Sabbath from Saturday (the seventh day) to Sunday (the first day). This made Christianity weak. It has caused many Sunday preachers to shy away from quoting the Bible in their sermons, specifically the section on the Ten Commandments. It has also made some of them utter blasphemies like the Ten Commandments were only relevant to the people of the Old Testament.

The Sunday Sabbath has caused trouble in the church, similar to the church at Corinth. Some of the problems are: misunderstandings about spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 12-14). Another thing that happened in the church of Corinth was Idolatry and Pagan Practices such as Eating Food Sacrificed to Idols (1 Corinthians 8).

Failure to keep the true Sabbath day holy has caused many people to try to fill that gap by other means. It has caused some to try to fill that gap by speaking in tongues. It has also made some turn to pagan practices and idolatry, such as erecting idols in their churches and bowing down to them. Some churches bring certain physical things from the land of Israel and worship them, believing that God will answer their prayers because they have those things.

Fasting

This is where Isaiah talked about fasting:

Isaiah 58:3-7 (KJ21) - "[3] Why have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. [4] Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. [5] Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

[6] Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? [7] Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

Isaiah taught that fasting should be done with understanding. Love to do things with understanding. This is because when you understand something that you believe in, you are well grounded in that belief. Ask God for understanding. When you do not understand a command that God is telling you to do, ask God to give you understanding on that command. Isaiah preached that fasting should not be done for debate or strife.

Isaiah spoke about common elements of fasting that were being carried out by the Israelites, such as bowing their heads as a bulrush. In Isaiah 58:5, the "bulrush" is used to depict the external appearance of humility and penitence that people might display during a fast. Here, "bowing down his head as a bulrush" refers to the way a person might physically lower their head in a manner similar to how the stem of a bulrush bends. The imagery suggests a superficial or outward show of humility, without true sincerity or the right intentions behind the fasting.

Therefore, what Isaiah meant was that fasting should go beyond the external appearance. He did not say bowing your head like a bulrush or wearing sackcloth and ashes is wrong. His emphasis was that humility should come deep down from the heart and not from the outward appearance. Outward appearances may deceive people but they cannot deceive God. Ask yourself, when you are fasting, are you fasting for people or for God?

This is the type of fasting that Christ tells us to do:

Matthew 6:16-18 (KJ21) - "[16] Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. [17] But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face, [18] that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

The Sabbath

These are the verses that Isaiah spoke concerning the Sabbath:

Isaiah 56:2 (KJ21) - "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."

Isaiah 56:6-7 (KJ21) - "[6] Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant, [7] even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar, for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJ21) - "[13] If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, [14] then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Isaiah taught that we need to lay hold of the Sabbath and keep ourselves from polluting it (Isaiah 56:2). One who does that, God refers to that person as blessed. God promises to bring those who faithfully keep the Sabbath to His holy mountain and make them joyful in His house of prayer. Failure to keep one of God's commandments while keeping all nine deprives us from the joy that God had ordained us to receive in keeping that one commandment.

We will be more joyful when we do everything that God tells us to do compared to when we do some. Isaiah preached that the Sabbath day is not a day to do our own pleasure and to speak our own words (Isaiah 58:13). Sabbath time should be fully devoted to God. God should be the center of our attention. When we make God the center of our attention, He will make us to ride upon the high places of the earth.

God will also feed us with the heritage of Jacob. What is the heritage of Jacob? In the context of Isaiah 58:14, "the heritage of Jacob" refers to the blessings and promises given to the descendants

of Jacob (Israel) by God. It signifies the spiritual and physical blessings that come with being part of God's covenant people.

Here is what "the heritage of Jacob" encompasses:

Covenant Blessings: It includes the promises and blessings that God made to Jacob and his descendants, such as prosperity, security, and a fruitful land. These promises were initially given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and extended to their descendants. There are many people who are not able to access covenant blessings because of hard-heartedness and disobedience.

Spiritual Riches: Beyond physical blessings, it also represents the spiritual inheritance of a close relationship with God, His guidance, and His favor.

Land and Prosperity: Historically, it refers to the land of Canaan, which was promised to the descendants of Jacob (the Israelites) as their inheritance. Land was a symbol of wealth in those days. It is also a symbol of wealth now but it is not the only symbol of wealth. As of now it can refer to other lands (that are fertile and productive, not necessarily in Canaan) or other material blessings.

Fulfillment of God’s Promises: This heritage is a symbol of God’s faithfulness to His promises and His provision for His people. People of God cannot lack because God is the constant source. He is the constant source of life and He is the constant source of all that is needed to sustain life.

Isaiah preached the entire truth. Truth is a whole since God is truth and God is a whole being, He is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). The body of Christ is one whole. Therefore, represent God as He is. Failure to do so is misrepresenting Him.

Promise of God's Everlasting Love

Isaiah 31:3 (KJV) - "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Isaiah conveyed God's enduring love and faithfulness toward His people. A human being can love you but the love of that person is not everlasting. For instance, someone who loves you so much can die. Therefore, as a result of their death, their love ends. The good things that they used to do for you will come to an end. However, God loves you with an everlasting love. The good things

that God used to do for you, He will still do them for you, even more if you abide by Him and you allow Him to abide in you.

Call to Repentance

Isaiah 1:16 (KJV) - "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil."

Isaiah called for repentance, urging people to turn from their sinful ways. The sinful human nature delights to do evil. We find pleasure in thinking evil, speaking evil, and doing evil more than we find pleasure in righteousness. The Bible says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13:23, KJ21)"

With our own power it is impossible, but with Christ all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

How can we become clean?

Exodus 31:13 (KJ21) - "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily, My Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord who doth sanctify you."

It is God who sanctifies us for we cannot sanctify ourselves.

How does God sanctify us?

1 Timothy 4:4-5 (KJ21) – "[4] For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; [5] for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer."

God sanctifies us through His Word. It is through prayer that believers ask for God's sanctifying touch on their daily lives.

The Lord's Promise to Zion

Isaiah 62:1 (KJV) - "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Isaiah prophesied about the restoration and glory of Zion. Pastor Randy Skeete says, “God is more desperate to get us into heaven than we are to get in.” We see Isaiah 62:1 portraying the persistence of God to make us righteous. He says that He will not rest until righteousness in us becomes extremely bright. In other words, God wants to make it so evident that we are righteous and that we are His people.

The brightness that will shine forth from our character would be dazzling to look at. No man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel. Instead, he puts it on a candle stick so that it can give light to all that are in the house (Matthew 5:15). When your righteousness shines so bright, God will not allow you to be under the table. He will put you in a top position so that you can give light to the entire world. God also wants to make your salvation as a lamp that burns (Isaiah 62:1). When a fire is burning, those close to it feel the heat. Now this is determined by how big the fire is. God’s fire quenched the water on the altar that Elijah had erected for God (1 Kings 18:38).

Water is meant to quench fire but God’s fire quenched water. God will make you quench those things that are meant to quench you. Burning is an effect of the heat that one is feeling. God will not rest until those around you feel the effect of your salvation. He will place you on high so that your light can shine bright to the entire world and will make the entire world feel the effect of your salvation.

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Assurance of God's Guidance

Isaiah 30:21 (KJV) - "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Isaiah assured the people that God would guide and lead them. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Jesus is the Word (John 1:1). Isaiah says that you shall hear a word behind you telling you which way to go. God’s Word is meant to show us the way. God’s Word is meant to guide us.

We are not able to clearly hear God's Word because we have surrounded ourselves with evil. Therefore, we are not able to get clear guidance on our lives. That is why we miss so many opportunities placed by God along our path and that is why we fumble so much in confusion. Take away evil and the Word of God will be clear to us. We will listen clearly to God's direction and follow the way leading to success. The good news is, Christ is there to take away that evil so that His directions are clear.

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Proclamation of God's Sovereignty

Isaiah 45:5 (KJV) - "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."

Isaiah proclaimed the sovereignty of God over all creation. There may be many gods but there is no other God. That is why God commands us not to have other gods before Him. This is because other gods cannot help us because they are man-made. God can help us because He is the One who made us and no one else made Him.

The root word אָזַר (azar) means "to gird," "to bind," "to strengthen," or "to equip." In the context of this verse, it emphasizes the action of God preparing, equipping, or strengthening someone for a purpose.

The phrase "I girded thee" implies that God has equipped or strengthened the person (in this case, Cyrus, as indicated in the surrounding passages) for their role and mission, even though they did not know God or recognize His presence. It highlights God's sovereignty and the idea that He can empower and prepare individuals for His purposes, regardless of their awareness or acknowledgment of Him.

The question is, if God is gracious enough to do that for those who do not believe in Him, how much will He do for those who believe in Him?

Like Isaiah, have faith in God and watch God do the greatest things that you have never imagined being done through you.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for the lessons that You have taught me through Your servant Isaiah. Forgive me for all the sins that I have committed. Help me to serve and worship You faithfully. Lord, thank you for sending Your son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. I ask you to save me from my sins and help me to inherit eternal life. Assure me of Your presence. Help me to comfort others. Renew my strength Lord. Help me to keep all Your commandments. Help me to turn away my foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleasure in Your holy day. Above all, shower me with Your everlasting love. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Write down the new lessons that you have learnt when reading about Isaiah that are applicable in your life.
2. What sin do you want God to save you from? Intentionally pray about it daily.

3. Isaiah responded to God's open call. What are some of the open calls that you have been ignoring? Ask God to help you to be more aware of His open calls.
4. Do you fast? How often do you fast? Be more intentional about fasting. You can create a fasting schedule.
5. Prayerfully find out how you can comfort those who are afflicted.
6. Ask God to guide you daily.
7. Ask God to renew your strength daily.

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CHAPTER 68

THE FAITH OF PROPHET JEREMIAH

In the potter's chambers where the potter toils,

A great work He does with common soil,

From dust we were created,

God's breath of life keeps us elevated.

In God's hands, broken clay shapes a perfect man,

God exalts, why don't we trust His perfect plan?

God is waiting for us, to Him alone let us run,

Hear, O people, the Lord our God is One.

"Can I not do with you as this potter does?"

Whispers the Lord, whose love always is and was,

Jeremiah endured persecution, he endured many wars,

Faithful in obedience, abiding by God's laws.

O Christians, God's people, a stiff-necked kind,

Hearts of stone, blind leading blind.

"You have forsaken Me," is God's cry,

But when troubles befall us, we ask God why?

God says,

"But still I call, relentless in grace,

Return to Me, seek My face,"

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Renewed in love, all things refreshed,

God's unmatchable love, the best of the best.

So, kneel at the wheel, where hope is spun,

The Potter is not finished, His work's not done,

From shards of despair, He forms anew,

His faithful hands are shaping you.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Background of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was a major prophet in the Old Testament, known as the "weeping prophet" due to the profound sorrow he expressed over the fate of Judah. His ministry spanned approximately 40 years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign (around 627 BC) until after the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian exile (around 586 BC).

Jeremiah in Hebrew is יִרְמְיָהוּ (Yirmeyahu), which means "Yahweh will exalt" or "The Lord exalts."

- יִרְמְ (yirm) – derived from a root meaning "to exalt" or "to lift up"
- יָהּ (Yah) – a shortened form of Yahweh, the name of God

Jeremiah's name signifies the exaltation or upliftment that comes from Yahweh, reflecting the themes of God's sovereignty and purpose throughout the book of Jeremiah.

Historical Context

Political Landscape: Jeremiah's ministry took place during a turbulent time in Judah's history. The nation faced threats from powerful empires such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The Babylonians eventually conquered Jerusalem, leading to the destruction of the temple and the exile of many Jews.

Spiritual Climate: The people of Judah were deeply entrenched in idolatry, social injustice, and disobedience to God's covenant. Jeremiah called them to repentance and warned of the impending judgment if they did not return to God.

Babylonian Exile: The central event during Jeremiah's ministry was the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's prophecies often focused on this event, urging the people to submit to Babylon as God's instrument of judgment and promising a future restoration.

Structure of the Book of Jeremiah

Chapters 1-25: Prophecies of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, with calls for repentance.

Chapters 26-45: Narratives of Jeremiah's life, his interactions with kings and false prophets, and messages of both judgment and hope.

Chapters 46-51: Prophecies against foreign nations.

Chapter 52: An appendix recounting the fall of Jerusalem and the exile.

The verses in Hebrews 11:32-35 mention prophets and heroes who demonstrated extraordinary faith. Jeremiah, as a prophet, fits within the group mentioned in Hebrews 11:32 ("...and of the prophets"). His life exemplifies faithfulness to God's call, even in the face of severe opposition and personal suffering.

Great personal cost marked Jeremiah’s ministry. He was persecuted, imprisoned, and threatened with death because of his prophecies (Jeremiah 20:1-2; 26:11; 37:15-16). His unwavering faith in delivering God's message, despite these hardships, aligns with the endurance highlighted in Hebrews 11:33-34.

Hebrews 11:35 mentions those who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." Jeremiah's messages often included themes of suffering and hope, such as the promise of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and the eventual restoration of Israel. Jeremiah’s prophecies foretold God’s miraculous interventions in history. For example, the preservation of a remnant and the future return from exile.

Jeremiah's ministry took place during a period of national crisis for Judah, characterized by political upheaval and spiritual decline. He prophesied judgment against the nation's sins but also offered hope for future restoration through a new covenant. Hebrews 11:32-35 connects to Jeremiah by highlighting the faith of prophets like him who remained steadfast in proclaiming God's truth despite severe opposition and personal suffering. Through their faith, these prophets, including Jeremiah, played a crucial role in God's redemptive plan, which would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

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Accepting His Purpose

Jeremiah 1:4-9 (KJ21) – “[4] Then the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [5] “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” [6] Then said I, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.” [7] But the Lord said unto me, “Say not, ‘I am a child’; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. [8] Be not afraid of their faces,

for I am with thee to deliver thee," saith the Lord. [9] Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, 'Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth.'"

The Word of God informed Jeremiah of his purpose. Unfortunately, many people die without knowing their purpose because they do not interact much with God's Word. God created everyone and everything with a purpose. He created all animals and plants for a purpose. All human beings were created for a purpose. A few people know their purpose at an early age but some struggle to know their purpose.

It is through interaction with God that we will be able to know our purpose in this life. It is through interaction with God that He will give us the proper direction on how to pursue that purpose. When we know our purpose, we will have focus. We will know what to do and what not to do. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them a purpose. He told them to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28).

After Adam and Eve sinned, the entire human race inherited a sinful nature. Therefore, we may not be able to know the purpose that we were created for as we are not familiar with God's voice. This calls for us to make a conscious decision to interact with God through prayer and studying the Bible so that He may tell us our purpose. One reason Satan brings all forms of distractions is that he does not want you to study the Bible and know your purpose and follow the proper direction to pursue your purpose.

Your purpose is meant to give you fulfillment. Your purpose is meant to enable you to earn a living. Your purpose is meant to make you great. Many people seem successful in their careers, but they are not living according to their purpose. That is why we have many people who hate their jobs despite earning a salary. They are in their jobs only because of the money. It is like being stuck in a marriage because of the children and not out of love for your partner. Their job does not give them fulfillment. This results in a world full of angry and selfish people. Their job has placed a trap on them that they cannot get out of because they want to pay the bills for the next month. They want to quit but they cannot quit because it seems risky.

Often, I hear people talking about the rabbit holes that masturbation, drugs, and lustful behavior among other evils put you into. I rarely hear people talking about the rabbit hole that a job that you do not like puts you into. When 9-year-old Mickel took my phone and saw the poems I have written,

he asked me, “Is this what you do as a job?” And I answered, “Yes, that is part of what I do as a job.” He answered and said, “Then your job must be so much fun.” He was right. I am always happy.

One thing that contributes to my happiness is that everything I do to earn a living is in line with my purpose and my gifts. I can write 5,000 to 10,000 words a day without feeling tired and bored. In fact, the more I write, the more excited I get. I have other gifts which I love engaging in that give me fulfillment. I may not have earned much money out of all these activities I do but I feel fulfilled. This causes me to transmit that positive energy to anyone who is around me, lighting up their lives.

Myles Munroe says there is a difference between your job and your work. He says that your job is what you are given to do, and your work is what you were created to do. He says that you need to seek deployment in your work and not employment for a job. Doing the work that God created you for while following His directions puts you in full time service to God.

From experience, God is the best leader you can ever have. When you work for Him, you will always feel refreshed as He will keep on renewing your strength (Isaiah 40:31). He will always comfort you when you are feeling low and keep you in a good mood. Unlike your earthly bosses, God is willing to give you as many off days as you want. You can do His work at your own pace. However, do not take so much time in doing your God-given assignments because you have limited time on this earth to make an impact and you do not know when your time will end.

God told Jeremiah his work which was to be a prophet unto the nations. At first, Jeremiah was hesitant because the role seemed quite big for him, and he was young. He had heard of the great prophets and the stupendous work that they had done for the kingdom of God. He probably wondered how he would be able to match their accomplishments while being young at that time. Therefore, he told God that he cannot speak because he is a child.

The mandate that God has given each one of us to carry out is huge and goes beyond what we know we can do. He has given us that mandate so that we put our trust in Him. It is okay to acknowledge that by our own powers we cannot do it, but it is not okay to refuse to take up the assignment He has given us. Refusing to take the assignments that God gives us is doubting God and doubting God is sin.

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His Word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do." – Messages to Young People, Page 309.4, Ellen G. White.

God told Jeremiah not to say that He is a child. He told him not to talk about his weaknesses and inability. Do not talk about how you cannot keep the Sabbath day holy or how you cannot fast. Trust in God to help you do what you have no power to do. God told Jeremiah not to look down on himself because he was young. Never look down on yourself and never allow anyone to look down on you. You can do all things through Christ, who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13). God assured Jeremiah that He would be with him. God touched Jeremiah's mouth and kept His words in the prophet's mouth.

In other words, God did the heavy work for Jeremiah. Jeremiah's work was only to deliver the Words given to him by God. It is like a delivery man working for a huge company. The delivery man does not engage himself in research and development of products. He does not engage himself in the process of manufacturing those products. He does not engage himself in the sales and marketing of those products. He just takes the products and delivers them to where he is sent.

In most companies, they give delivery men means of transport to use when delivering their products. That looks so simple, right? Yes, it is extraordinarily simple. Thus, God says that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). That was the case with Jeremiah and that will be the same case with me and you when we heed God's call and follow the purpose that He has ordained for us.

Your purpose will be much easier to do than the job you are in which you hate. Your purpose can give you so much money than the job which you are finding hard to leave. Your purpose can make you great beyond your imagination. Jeremiah's book has been read by many congregations and generations. Thousands of years have passed, and it is still read. The same applies to all the Bible writers. Most of them did not know that their work was going to impact people so much. As many of them are still dead in the grave, they have no idea that the work they did is being read till now.

What made them so great? What made them great was accepting the simple work that God gave them. God is the type of teacher who gives you an assignment that seems so difficult to you. He

goes ahead and does everything for you and gives you to deliver it to Him and rewards you for doing that assignment well.

Proclaiming an Unpopular Message

Jeremiah 7:27 (KJV) - "Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee."

God prepared Jeremiah beforehand on what he was going to encounter while spreading His message. He did not want Jeremiah to be caught by surprise. Therefore, He told him that people will not listen to the words he tells them. God had placed His words in Jeremiah's mouth (Jeremiah 1:9), meaning the words that Jeremiah was to preach were divine words.

Human beings cannot properly comprehend divine words. That is why it is important to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us while studying the Bible. Failure to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you can lead to a misunderstanding of the Bible which may cause one to hate it and to reject the divine words of the Most High God.

The people that Jeremiah was being sent to had sunk so deep into sin that their minds were too clogged to comprehend the truth. Rejecting Jeremiah did not mean that the words Jeremiah spoke were less divine because they rejected him, it means that their minds were too carnal. God's message is always unpopular to an audience that has made sin popular. God's words are as unfathomably high as the heavens are from the earth.

We need to have minds that have been intertwined with the Divine Most Holy One to understand them. This preparation that God gave Jeremiah was essential to him so that Jeremiah does not give up when he sees people not listening to him. If the people faced judgment, it would have been out of their own choice. They could not say that they were not told. That is how fair God is. Jeremiah went ahead and faithfully proclaimed God's message of impending judgment to a hostile audience.

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The Potter’s House

Jeremiah 18:1-6 (KJ21) - "[1] The Word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, [2] “Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words.” [3] Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. [4] And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. [5] Then the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, [6] “O house of Israel,

cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith the Lord. "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel."

The potter represents God, and the clay represents the people of Israel (and by extension, all humanity). Just as the potter has control over the clay to shape it as he wills, God has control over nations and individuals. The marred vessel signifies Israel's current state of disobedience and sin. However, the potter's ability to reshape the vessel demonstrates God's willingness to reform and restore those who repent and turn back to Him.

The passage underscores that while God has the power to pronounce judgment, He also has the power to extend mercy and bring about renewal. The fate of the clay (Israel) depends on its responsiveness to the potter's (God's) hands. This object lesson serves as a call to the people of Israel to recognize their need for repentance and to submit to God's will, allowing Him to shape their destiny.

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Enduring Persecution and Imprisonment

Jeremiah 20:2 (KJV) - "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord."

Jeremiah 37:15-16 (KJV) - "[15] Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison. [16] When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days."

Jeremiah endured physical persecution and imprisonment for his prophecies. As Christians, we should not dread persecution because persecution for righteousness' sake is a blessing (Matthew 5:10-12). Persecution while doing righteous activities puts you at the platform to be highly favored and supremely blessed by God. This is because it is easy to get from point A to point B without getting obstacles on the way. However, when you encounter obstacles on the way, the journey becomes more difficult.

When you go back because of the obstacles, you will not reach your destination but when you endure and overcome all obstacles, you will finally reach your destination. Human beings will care less about the obstacles you have endured, especially if they are not on the journey with you. Therefore, no matter what you tell them, they would not understand properly what you have endured. Many of them would not reward you for enduring those obstacles. God is not like that. God is with you on the journey, and He sees all the obstacles that you have had to overcome in your journey. He will reward you greatly for overcoming them all.

In Jeremiah’s story we see that Pashur smote Jeremiah and put him in stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin (Jeremiah 20:2). Pashur, a priest and the chief officer in the house of the Lord, felt threatened and angered by Jeremiah's prophecies. Jeremiah specifically named Pashur in his prophecies, calling him "Magor-Missabib," meaning "terror on every side," and predicting his captivity and death in Babylon (Jeremiah 20:3-6). Pashur reacted to these messages by striking Jeremiah and putting him in the stocks to punish him and publicly humiliate him, attempting to silence his prophetic warnings.

The princes were angry with Jeremiah, smote him, and put him in prison for many days (Jeremiah 37:15-16). The princes and other leaders viewed Jeremiah's prophecies as demoralizing and a threat to their authority and the city's defense. They believed he was undermining their efforts to resist the Babylonian siege. In their anger, the princes had Jeremiah beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which had been converted into a prison. This imprisonment involved harsh conditions, as Jeremiah was placed in a dungeon and confined in a cell.

The truth will keep marching on. You can oppose the messenger, but you cannot oppose the message of truth. We have put men and women of God into persecution because we do not want to listen to the messages that they have been sent to tell us. God does not desire to hurt us. He sends the truth to us so that we can be humble and go to Him.

It is through our hard-heartedness and pride that we are unwilling to change our ways and since we do not want to change our ways, we fight those whom God has sent. Fighting them is adding more blessings to them and bringing more curses to ourselves. We may defeat them physically but the Lord who fights for them and who is stronger than us all will take the battle against them as a battle against Him and we will face dire consequences.

Our focus should be on the message and not the messenger because God can use anybody. When we focus on the message of truth, we will get all the blessings that the message possesses. However, when we focus on the messenger and not the message, we will add no value in our lives.

Writing God's Words in a Scroll

Jeremiah 36:4 (KJV) - "Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book."

Baruch:

- The name **Baruch** (בָּרוּךְ in Hebrew) means "blessed."

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Neriah:

- The name **Neriah** (נֵרִיָּה in Hebrew) means "The Lord is my lamp" or "Lamp of the Lord."

Role of Baruch

Baruch, the son of Neriah, was a scribe and faithful companion of the prophet Jeremiah. He played a crucial role in documenting Jeremiah's prophecies. Jeremiah dictated the words given to him by the Lord, and Baruch wrote them down on a scroll (as seen in Jeremiah 36:4). Baruch's work was vital in preserving the prophetic messages and ensuring they were communicated to the people and the king.

The Baruch mentioned in Jeremiah is traditionally considered to be the same Baruch who is attributed to the Book of Baruch in the Apocrypha. The Book of Baruch is a deuterocanonical book included in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, but it is not part of the Hebrew Bible.

Jeremiah dictated God's words to Baruch to be written in a scroll; despite knowing it could provoke anger from the authorities. During the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, God instructed Jeremiah to write down all the prophecies he had received over the years (Jeremiah 36:2). Jeremiah chose to be a blessing to Baruch by involving him in writing the book.

Delegation of tasks assigned to us increases our efficiency and our effectiveness. It enables one to do more than they could have done and enables one to do higher quality work in the little that they have chosen to do or have been given to do. Most people are reluctant to delegate because they do not trust others with their work. They do not believe that others can do better work than them. Do not fear delegating.

Delegate and train others to do what God has instructed you to do. God has not given you that opportunity to work for Him because you are perfect. Therefore, you should not stress yourself to look for perfect people to do the work that you want to delegate to them. Instead, look for people who are willing and teachable and give them the privilege to be a blessing and to be blessed.

Jeremiah 36:8 (KJ21) - "And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house."

Baruch was faithful and he did everything that Jeremiah had commanded him to do. He wrote the book and he read the words of the Lord in the Lord's house. He went the extra mile to read the words of God and not just write.

Jeremiah 36:10 (KJ21) - "Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people."

In Hebrew, the name **Gemariah** (גְּמַרְיָה) means "Yahweh has brought to an end" or "Yahweh has completed." The name combines the Hebrew root **"kamar"** (כָּמַר) meaning "to complete" or "to finish," with the divine name **"Yah"** (יָהּ) referring to God. Gemariah is described in Jeremiah 36:10 as the son of Shaphan, a scribe. He played a role during the time of Jeremiah in the administration and religious practices of Judah.

In Hebrew, the name **Shaphan** (שָׁפָן) means "rock badger" or "hyrax," referring to a small, rock-dwelling animal. The name is derived from the Hebrew word **"shafan"** (שָׁפָן) which means "rock badger" or "hyrax." This name might symbolize a sense of steadfastness or small but resilient nature. Shaphan is mentioned as Gemariah's father and is known as a scribe and a government official during the reign of King Josiah. He is notable for his role in the discovery of the Book of the Law in the Temple, which was a significant event in Judah's history.

Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. He read them in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe. Shaphan was a well-known scribe and Baruch was also a scribe. Scribes were involved in the recording and copying of texts, interpreting and teaching, administrative duties and legal expertise.

Baruch associated himself with other scribes like himself. It is important to associate yourself with people from the same field as you so that you can have more insight concerning that field. This will enable you to have more knowledge in that field. You will have insights concerning the challenges and benefits.

It is not good to operate in isolation because no person is an island. God has placed us amid people for a reason. Jeremiah involved Baruch and Baruch involved himself with other scribes. Baruch read the words that he had written to the entire public. The Word of God is meant to be publicly proclaimed. It is not meant to be hidden. Mention it to people whether they know about it or not.

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2 Peter 1:20 (KJ21) - "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."

Buying a Field as a Sign of Hope

Jeremiah 32:9-10 (KJV) - "And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances."

Why did Jeremiah buy the field?

Jeremiah 32:6-7 - "[6] And Jeremiah said, “The Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [7] Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thy uncle shall come unto thee, saying, ‘Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.’"

It was God who instructed Jeremiah to buy the field. Do you seek God’s Word before buying or engaging in something? We should seek God’s opinion all the time because it is in Him we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). Nothing we are to do should be independent of God. We should ask God for permission and respect whatever decision He makes. We should ask His guidance concerning what He has given us permission to do.

The purchase was done in obedience to God’s command. In Jeremiah 32:6-7, God told Jeremiah that his cousin Hanameel would come to him with an offer to buy the field. This act was meant to demonstrate that despite the dire circumstances, God had plans to restore and bless His people in the future.

Jeremiah's purchase of the field was a symbolic act. During this time, Judah was facing impending destruction due to the Babylonian siege. The city of Jerusalem was under threat, and the future seemed bleak. In this context, Jeremiah’s purchase was a sign of faith and hope in the future restoration of the land. The transaction was conducted in accordance with legal and formal practices.

Jeremiah bought the field from Hanameel, who was his cousin, and followed all legal procedures: paying the money, subscribing the evidence (writing a legal document), sealing it, and taking witnesses. This ensured the legitimacy of the purchase and highlighted the importance of the act. All legal procedures in doing our earthly business should be followed. If the government requires you to pay a certain amount of tax, pay it. If the business that you are in requires you to have a certain license, have it.

By purchasing the field, Jeremiah publicly demonstrated his faith in God’s promise of restoration. Despite the current situation, he acted on the belief that the land would once again be inhabited and fruitful. This purchase served as a prophetic assurance to the people of Judah. It was a tangible sign that God’s promises of future restoration and prosperity were still valid, even in the midst of judgment and destruction.

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Interceding for the People

Jeremiah 14:20-21 (KJV) - "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us."

Jeremiah prayed and interceded for the people of Judah, despite God's instructions to stop praying for them due to their persistent rebellion. In spite of being a servant of God, he acknowledged that

he had sinned when praying to God. He took the blame of the entire nation on his shoulders. Pointing fingers and trying your best to get away from the blame is not a Godly act. It is an act of evil for it is an act of pride. It is pride because it is trying to elevate oneself and appear perfect.

Jesus was humble enough to take the entire sin of the world on His shoulders even though He was flawless. As a leader, your subordinates might do something wrong and the blame is placed on you. Carry that blame and embrace it. Doing that will cause you to be more diligent next time. That principle should apply when you take a leadership role in any jurisdiction, even in the family.

Taking the blame makes you humble and willing to correct the mistakes that have been done. Trying to free yourself from the blame will give you a false sense of belief that you are perfect. Therefore, you will be reluctant to do more to become better.

Matthew 5:11-12 (KJ21) - "[11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."

God did not tell us to try hard and defend ourselves when we are falsely accused. Instead, He told us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. This is because those who are leveling false accusations against us are giving us blessings in disguise. Jeremiah took the blame and interceded for the people. The people he interceded for are the same ones who were opposing and persecuting him but he still interceded for them. Pray for people, even the ones who cause you the most problems.

Matthew 5:43-44 (KJ21) - "[43] Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

Trusting God's Promise of Restoration

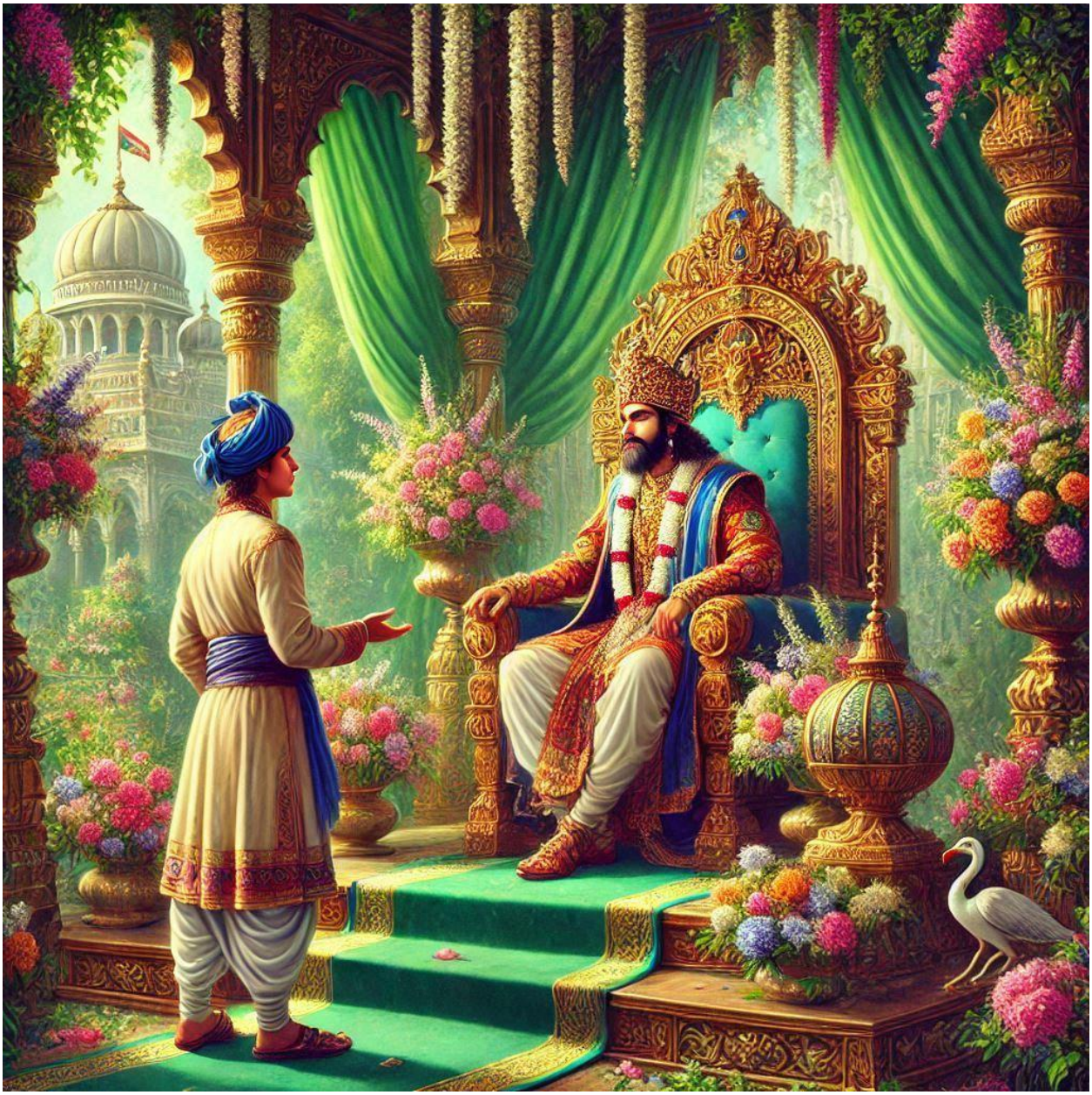
Jeremiah 31:31-34 (KJV) - "[31] Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: [32] Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: [33] But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the

Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. [34] And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jeremiah conveyed God's promise of a new covenant and future restoration for Israel and Judah. Through Jeremiah, God promised to make a new covenant with Israel. He promised to write the law in their hearts so that they may be able to differentiate between righteousness and evil and so that it can be in their hearts to do good in the sight of the Lord. We should pray for God to write His law in our hearts.

Philippians 2:13 (KJV) – “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

Warning King Zedekiah



Jeremiah 38:17-18 (KJV) - "[17] Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: [18] But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand."

Jeremiah consistently warned King Zedekiah of the consequences of resisting Babylon, urging submission as God's will. He gave him two options to choose from. One option was to go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes while the other option was not to go. He told him of the consequences that each decision carries. We have a choice to choose between righteousness and evil. When we choose righteousness, we will have blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-13). When we choose evil, we shall encounter curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

What did King Zedekiah do after Jeremiah gave him that message?

In the verses following Jeremiah's message, Zedekiah expressed fear to Jeremiah that if he surrendered, the Jews who had already defected to the Babylonians would mistreat him (Jeremiah 38:19). Jeremiah reassured Zedekiah that he would not be handed over to them and that it would go well with him if he obeyed (Jeremiah 38:20-23).

Despite the reassurance and the dire warning, Zedekiah did not surrender. He was indecisive and lacked the courage to follow through with the prophet's counsel. He did not trust God who gave him that reassurance through Prophet Jeremiah. As a result, Zedekiah's inaction led to the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. The Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, and the city eventually fell. Zedekiah tried to escape but was captured near Jericho (Jeremiah 39:4-5).

The consequences of not heeding Jeremiah's warning were severe. The Babylonians captured Zedekiah, killed his sons before his eyes, and then blinded him. They took him in chains to Babylon, where he remained until his death. Jerusalem was burned, and the temple and the city walls were destroyed (Jeremiah 39:6-9).

Refusing to Alter God's Message

Jeremiah 26:12-13 (KJV) - "[12] Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. [13] Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you."

Jeremiah had been prophesying in the Temple, warning that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed if the people did not repent and turn back to God (Jeremiah 26:4-6). The priests,

the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah's words and were outraged. They seized Jeremiah and said he deserved to die for the message he preached (Jeremiah 26:7-9).

When the officials (princes) of Judah heard about the commotion, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord. They took their seats at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's house. They took on the role of judges to hear the case (Jeremiah 26:10). The priests and prophets formally accused Jeremiah before the princes and the people, saying, “This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears” (Jeremiah 26:11).

Hebrews 11:6 says that it is impossible to please God without faith and it also says that God is a rewarder to those who please Him by diligently seeking Him. Numbers 23:19 says that God does not lie. Jesus says in John 14:6 that He is the truth. John 1:1 says that Jesus is the Word. This means that God’s Word is truth. If God’s Word is truth and God cannot lie, then it is true when God says He will reward those who please Him in Hebrews 11:6.

Knowing this, the question is, who should we aim to please? God or man? Most of us despise the rewards of God by chasing after the rewards of men. When invited to preach to a church, some pastors shy away from saying the truth so that they can get invited again. Many preachers do not want to preach the truth because it does not bring much offering. Jeremiah refused to alter God’s message to please the people or the authorities, even when it led to persecution.

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Confronting False Prophets

Jeremiah 28:15-16 (KJV) - "[15] Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. [16] Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord."

Jeremiah confronted and opposed false prophets who contradicted his message of impending judgment. He did not fear delivering such a difficult message to Hananiah. Hananiah was not sent

by God, but he confused God's people and made them trust in a lie. God told him through Jeremiah that he would die that same year because he had taught rebellion against the Lord.

Hananiah had a chance to repent and change his ways when Jeremiah told him that. This is because God delights in mercy and He is more than willing to forgive all sins. When God warns you of a sin you are committing, repent earnestly, and change your ways.

Hananiah had falsely prophesied that God would break the yoke of Babylon and restore the vessels of the Lord's house and the exiles from Babylon within two years (Jeremiah 28:2-4). Jeremiah initially responded by expressing hope that Hananiah's prophecy would come true, but reminded him that the true test of a prophet is whether their prophecies come to pass (Jeremiah 28:5-9). Despite Jeremiah's warning, Hananiah doubled down on his false prophecy. He took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck, which Jeremiah had been wearing as a symbolic act of the coming Babylonian captivity, and broke it (Jeremiah 28:10-11).

After Hananiah broke the yoke, the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again. He told Hananiah that although he had broken a wooden yoke, God would replace it with an iron yoke, symbolizing an even stronger subjugation under Babylon (Jeremiah 28:12-14). True to Jeremiah's prophecy, Hananiah died in the seventh month of that same year (Jeremiah 28:17).

Proclaiming God's Sovereignty

Jeremiah 27:6-7 (KJV) - "[6] And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. [7] And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him."

Jeremiah proclaimed God's sovereignty over all nations, emphasizing that God used Babylon as His instrument of judgment. God gave the Israelites to the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, they were taken to captivity. When you disobey God, you place yourself at the entrance of captivity. Disobeying God willingly is like taking chains and tying them on your hands. Disobedience leads to lack of freedom while obedience leads to freedom. God made all nations, including the nation of Judah, serve King Nebuchadnezzar.

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Encouraging the Exiles

Jeremiah 29:4-7 (KJV) - "[4] Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; [5] Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; [6] Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. [7] And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon, encouraging them to settle down, seek the welfare of the city, and trust in God’s promise of eventual return. God’s goodness caused him to give the people of Judah tips on how to be successful even while in captivity. This shows that God had not forgotten them despite them angering Him. He told them to give birth to as many children as possible and to seek the peace of the city because if the city has peace, they shall also have peace.

Predicting Babylon's Fall

Jeremiah 51:60-64 (KJV) - "[60] So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. [61] And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; [62] Then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate forever. [63] And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: [64] And

thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah."

Jeremiah prophesied the eventual fall of Babylon, demonstrating his faith in God’s ultimate justice and sovereignty.

The name Seraiah (שְׂרָיָה in Hebrew) means "Yahweh is Prince" or "Yahweh has prevailed." It reflects a recognition of God’s authority and power.

Seraiah, mentioned in Jeremiah 51:60-64, was the son of Neriah and brother of Baruch, who was Jeremiah’s scribe (Jeremiah 32:12). He held the position of quartermaster (Jeremiah 51:59), indicating a role of significant responsibility in the royal administration. His task in Babylon was part of an official mission, which underscores his trustworthiness and the high regard in which he was held.

Jeremiah faithfully recorded all the words that God had spoken against Babylon, despite the city's apparent power and dominance at the time. This required trust in God's sovereignty and justice. He instructed Seraiah to read aloud the words of judgment against Babylon when he arrived there. This act of publicly proclaiming Babylon’s downfall was an expression of faith in God’s prophetic Word, trusting that God would fulfill His promise of judgment against the powerful empire.

Jeremiah directed Seraiah to bind the written prophecy to a stone and cast it into the Euphrates River, symbolizing the complete and irreversible destruction of Babylon. This symbolic action demonstrated faith that God’s Word would come to pass just as certainly as the stone would sink and never rise again. Given Babylon’s immense power, proclaiming its destruction was an act of immense courage and boldness. Jeremiah’s faith in God’s promise allowed him to act without fear of immediate consequences from Babylonian authorities.

Staying in Judah After the Babylonian Conquest

Jeremiah 40:6 (KJV) - "Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land."

After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah chose to stay with the remnant in Judah rather than going to Babylon, showing his commitment to his people.

Meaning of names

Gedaliah (גְּדַלְיָה)

Meaning: The name Gedaliah means "Yahweh is great" or "Yahweh has become great."

Identity: Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. He was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, as the governor over the cities of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 40:5). He was tasked with governing the remnant of the people left in the land and ensuring order and stability.

Ahikam (אֲחִיקָם)

Meaning: The name Ahikam means "My brother has risen" or "Brother of support."

Identity: Ahikam was the son of Shaphan, a scribe during the reign of King Josiah. Ahikam is known for his support of the prophet Jeremiah, having saved him from death when he was threatened by the people and the officials (Jeremiah 26:24). He was a member of a prominent and influential family in Judah.

Mizpah (מִצְפָּה)

Meaning: The name Mizpah means "watchtower" or "lookout."

Identity: Mizpah was a significant town in the territory of Benjamin, often used as a place of assembly and refuge. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Mizpah became the administrative center under Gedaliah’s governorship.

Here we see that Jeremiah was close to the house of Shaphan as Gedalian and Ahikam were both relatives of Shaphan. Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, was known to be supportive of Jeremiah. Given Ahikam's previous defense of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:24), it is likely that Gedaliah shared his father's supportive stance. Staying with Gedaliah would have provided Jeremiah with a measure of safety and support.

Gedaliah was appointed by the Babylonian authorities as the governor of Judah, indicating that he was seen as a capable and trustworthy leader. His role was to bring stability to the region and oversee the remnant of the population. Jeremiah's presence with Gedaliah would lend spiritual and moral support to this effort and help maintain order among the people.

Jeremiah's actions were often guided by divine instruction. His decision to stay with Gedaliah might have been influenced by God's direction. He ensured that Jeremiah remained among the people to continue his prophetic ministry and give guidance during this transitional period.

By staying with Gedaliah in Mizpah, Jeremiah was able to stay with the remnant of his people. Thus, he continued his mission, offering leadership, counsel, and hope in a time of upheaval and uncertainty. This would have been important for maintaining the continuity of his prophetic ministry and supporting the community.

Warning Against Going to Egypt

Jeremiah 42:19-22 (KJV) - "[19] The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. [20] For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. [21] And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which He hath sent me unto you. [22] Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn."

After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, the Babylonian conquest left Judah in ruins. A remnant of people remained in the land, led by Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians appointed as governor. However, after Gedaliah was assassinated (Jeremiah 41:2), fear of Babylonian retribution caused the people to consider fleeing to Egypt for safety.

The people believed that Egypt would be a safe haven from the Babylonians. Historically, Egypt had been a place of refuge and a powerful nation. However, God made it clear through Jeremiah that Egypt would not give them the protection they sought and that they would face the same

calamities there. Throughout Israel's history, reliance on Egypt had often been condemned by God. Egypt represented a place of bondage (as in the Exodus), and turning to Egypt symbolized a lack of faith in God's protection and provision.'

We trust in the world and the ways of the world more than we trust in God. We trust in secular education more than we trust in God's education. Pastor Randy Skeete often preaches about a church elder who would kick the Bible out of his son's hands because he wanted his son to spend time studying for exams in his field. God does not mind us studying other things. For example, He did not have a problem when Daniel and his friends studied things in the Babylonian curriculum. Instead, He wants us to put His studies first.

Genuine Christians should develop curriculums in every field that glorify God. Imagine a kindergarten or an elementary school where students are taught stories of the Bible in their language studies rather than false fairy tales. It will be a beautiful thing when children are aligned with truth from an early age. The education of the world may seem innocent but a good chunk of it is designed to pull us away from God.

I was thinking about programming classes recently and I remembered how when we are introduced to programming, we are told to create a program that displays, "Hello World." When you say, "Hello world," how will the world respond? It may seem innocent, but I thought to myself that this might be a subliminal way to lead us to the teachings of the law of attraction which emphasize the universe as a supreme being and pushes us to believe that the universe has power to give us what we want to get.

The law of attraction points us to the universe instead of pointing us to the maker of the universe. Look at a story like Robin Hood being taught in some schools. Robin Hood justifies its immoral teaching of stealing by making stealing appear noble because Robin Hood steals from the rich and gives to the poor. This encourages theft and robbery in society. It also encourages the so-called poor to be lazy. I am yet to see a kindergarten fairy tale that mentions God or Jesus because I have never seen one.

Our schools are getting more corrupted in that there are some schools in some countries in the world that have included gay couples when teaching children about families. God wants us to be

different from the world. He does not want us to embrace the ways of the world. That is why He often condemned reliance on Egypt.

God does not want us to bend down to the world for our financial solutions either. That is why Christians are encouraged to start their own enterprises. God wants us to be the leading people in every field. If genuine Christians led in every field, the entire world would be blessed. However, that is not the case. We have allowed the people of the world to take over and by their taking over we are at their mercy. They dictate the food that we eat. They dictate what we are taught in school. They dictate the houses that we live in. They dictate our daily practices. They dictate everything.

We have embraced a limiting theology that looks good but is indeed evil. We do not want to make great strides in our financial activities because we falsely believe that God does not want us to make much money. “I am contented with the little that I have, I need not do more.” Such a statement may sound like a noble and modest statement, but it is a selfish statement. The money one may be making might be enough to feed them and their families but not enough to feed another person. God has put us in this world to help as many people as possible, not just ourselves and our families. Therefore, it is selfish to only want to make enough money for you and your family.

Christians have left charity work to evil entrepreneurs and organizations who foster immorality in society such as homosexuality. Other Christians have embraced a theology that they are waiting for Jesus and because they are waiting for Jesus, they need not do any money-making activity in the world. God gave human beings a commandment before sin to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). The word subdue means to conquer.

We are to subdue the world with every gift that God has given us, using every opportunity that God has given us. When we do that, it would be easier for more people in the world to join our faith. When we are at the mercy of people of the world, how will we persuade them to join us when we are busy begging them?

God explicitly instructed the remnant of Judah not to go to Egypt. Jeremiah conveyed this clear command from the Lord: "The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt" (Jeremiah 42:19). Disobeying this direct command would be an act of rebellion against God's will.

The people of Judah had approached Jeremiah, asking him to seek God's guidance for them, promising to obey whatever the Lord said. However, God revealed to Jeremiah that they were insincere in their request. They had already decided in their hearts to go to Egypt, regardless of God's answer: "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it" (Jeremiah 42:20).

Some people love forcing their own answers to be God’s answers. When they pray, they do not fully yield to God’s will. They yield to their own will and try to force God to yield to that will. It is like those people who ask questions with an answer already in their minds. They do not want to gain new knowledge. They want to confirm their old beliefs and feel a sense of being right.

God wants us to go to Him with humility and sincerity. When we ask Him to show us the way, we should be willing to follow the way that He directs. We cannot go to God and tell Him to show us the way while we have decided in our hearts to follow our own ways, no matter the direction that He gives.

Jeremiah warned the remnant in Judah against fleeing to Egypt, insisting they should trust in God's protection in the land He had given them. Jeremiah warned that if they went to Egypt, they would face severe consequences, including death by the sword, famine, and pestilence: "Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn" (Jeremiah 42:22). This warning indicated that seeking refuge in Egypt would not bring safety but destruction.

It is God who protects and not a person. It is God who protects and not a place. The Israelites trusted in the land of Egypt more than they trusted in God. Trusting in anything or anyone more than God brings a curse on that person (Jeremiah 17:5).

Prophesying in Egypt

Jeremiah 43:8-11 (KJV) - "[8] Then came the Word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, [9] Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; [10] And say unto them, Thus

saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. [11] And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword."

Egypt was both a place of refuge and a political player in the region. Many from Judah sought refuge in Egypt after the Babylonian conquest, hoping to escape Nebuchadnezzar's reach. The remnant of Judah disobeyed God's command by going to Egypt. God had explicitly told them not to go to Egypt, but they ignored this command and sought refuge there, trusting in Egypt's strength rather than in God's protection (Jeremiah 42:19-22).

The name Tahpanhes (תַּחְפַּנְחֵס in Hebrew) is derived from the Egyptian name *Daphnae*, which was a city on the eastern border of Egypt. It means "fortress" or "stronghold." In the Greek context, it is known as *Daphnae*. Despite the remnant of Judah's disobedience and decision to flee to Egypt against God's instruction, Jeremiah remained obedient to God's commands. Jeremiah continued to prophesy God's judgment against them for their disobedience even when he was forcibly taken to Egypt.

When God instructed him to take the stones and hide them in the clay at the entrance of Pharaoh's house, Jeremiah complied without hesitation (Jeremiah 43:9). Jeremiah's actions were performed "in the sight of the men of Judah" (Jeremiah 43:9), making his prophecy a public declaration. This bold public act of hiding the stones symbolized the future establishment of Nebuchadnezzar's throne in Egypt, a daunting task given the political and social context.

Proclaiming that Nebuchadnezzar, the enemy of Judah, would invade and conquer Egypt was an unpopular and dangerous message. Yet, Jeremiah faithfully delivered God's words, showing his unwavering commitment to God's truth regardless of the personal risk involved. Jeremiah trusted that God's plans would be fulfilled even when they seemed improbable. Predicting the Babylonian conquest of Egypt required faith in God's ultimate control over nations and events, especially since Egypt appeared to be a powerful and secure refuge at that time.

Predicting the Destruction of Egypt

Jeremiah 44:27-28 (KJV) - "[27] Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. [28] Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, Mine, or theirs."

Jeremiah predicted the destruction of Egypt by Babylon, maintaining his role as God's prophet even in a foreign land. He predicted that all the men of Judah would be consumed by the sword and by the famine. A few of them would escape the sword and go to the land of Judah from the land of Egypt. All the remnant of Judah that went to the land of Egypt would know whose word stands, God’s Word or theirs. God’s Word stands firm. God’s Word created and sustains the world. It is God alone who knows what will befall a nation. We should not trust nations because of how prosperous and stable they seem. We should trust in God.

Jeremiah's Death

The Bible does not provide specific details about the death of Jeremiah. According to tradition and historical accounts, there are different views regarding his death:

1. **Jewish Tradition**: Some Jewish traditions suggest that Jeremiah was stoned to death by his own people in Egypt because they were angered by his prophecies against them.
2. **Christian Tradition**: Some early Christian writers, such as Tertullian and Jerome, also hold that Jeremiah was martyred in Egypt.

While the exact circumstances of Jeremiah's death remain uncertain, what is clear is his unwavering faith and dedication to God's mission until the end of his life.

Jeremiah's ministry was marked by extraordinary acts of faith, including accepting God's call despite personal reluctance, delivering unpopular messages, enduring persecution and imprisonment, writing God's words on a scroll, buying a field as a sign of hope, interceding for the people, and continuing to prophesy even when forcibly taken to Egypt. His life and actions exemplify steadfast faith, courage, and obedience to God in the face of overwhelming adversity. Jeremiah's prophetic ministry left a lasting legacy, emphasizing the importance of faithfulness, repentance, and hope in God's promises.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for the lessons that I've learned from Prophet Jeremiah. Help me to have the heart to empathize with other people. You are the potter and I'm the clay. So, mold me like clay and make me perfect just as You are perfect. Give me the heart to endure persecution and opposition for Your name's sake. I ask You to increase my level of patience. I pray that You bless my family, friends, enemies, and other people as well in my country. Please help me to never lose hope in You. Oh, Lord, You are the most sovereign and You are worthy to receive praise and honor. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Make a daily prayer for God to help you overcome opposition.
2. Ask various people for their prayer requests. Write them down and pray for them daily.
3. Spend time in quiet reflection or in group discussion about areas in life where trust in God is needed.
4. Identify hopes, fears, or areas requiring perseverance, aligning them with Jeremiah's themes.
5. On slips of paper, write personal prayers, commitments to trust God, or hopeful outcomes you are asking Him to fulfill.
6. Look for Bible verses from the Book of Jeremiah that can give you encouragement.
7. Prayerfully find out how and where you can volunteer to serve others.

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CHAPTER 69

THE FAITH OF PROPHET EZEKIEL

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Ezekiel saw visions of God while in captivity,

God can use you in your situation, be sure to hearken diligently,

Captivity did not stop Ezekiel from conducting divine activity,

God can use you in your situation, He can use you significantly.

God showed Ezekiel the valley of dry bones,

Can those bones live? Only God knows,

Have active faith, faith that's not like dry bones,

Can those bones live? The laws of life are in God's laws.

Ezekiel prophesied against sinful nations,

God's warnings come from a heart with the best intentions,

Ezekiel saw symbols and God gave him interpretations,

God's warnings are accompanied by Christ's intercessions.

Though it is planted, will it thrive and grow?

We often fail in our efforts when they are contrary to God's law,

Though you strive to fight, will you win the war?

Have faith and you will reap from the good that you sow.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Introduction

The name "Ezekiel" means "God will strengthen" or "God strengthens." This reflects the theme of divine support and resilience, central to Ezekiel's role as a prophet delivering messages of both judgment and hope. Ezekiel was a prophet during the Babylonian Exile. It was a period of profound crisis for the Israelites following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Ezekiel's ministry spanned from around 593 BCE to 571 BCE. Ezekiel was born into a priestly family, making him both a priest and a prophet. His father was Buzi. He was exiled to Babylon along with other Jewish captives after the initial deportation in 597 BCE. He lived in a settlement near the Chebar River.

The meaning of the name "Buzi" (Ezekiel's father) is less clear but is often interpreted as "contemptible" or "despised." This name might signify humility or lowliness, contrasting with the prominent role Ezekiel himself would play. This shows us clearly that you do not have to be the son of a well-known great person to become great. Ezekiel's father's name meant contemptible or despised, but Ezekiel became a mighty prophet that people still read his book to this date.

The Book of Ezekiel addresses themes of divine judgment against Israel and the nations due to their sins. It promises future restoration and renewal. It explains why the exile happened and assures the people of eventual redemption and restoration. Ezekiel's messages include calls for repentance, urging the Israelites to return to faithfulness and righteousness. The Book of Ezekiel was composed during Ezekiel's prophetic career, roughly between 593 BCE and 571 BCE. The text reflects the events and visions Ezekiel experienced during this period.

Ezekiel's prophecies are known for their vivid and symbolic visions, such as the vision of the valley of dry bones and the chariot vision (Merkavah). The book also includes symbolic acts performed by Ezekiel to illustrate his messages. The book includes oracles against Jerusalem, various nations, and promises of future restoration, including a vision of a new temple and a renewed land.

In the "Hall of Faith, (Hebrews 11)" the faith and endurance of various figures from the Bible is recounted. These verses highlight the achievements and sufferings of faithful individuals, including prophets and martyrs. Ezekiel's life and ministry reflect the kind of faithfulness and endurance praised in Hebrews 11. Ezekiel remained steadfast in delivering God's messages despite the suffering and challenges faced by the exiled Israelites.

Ezekiel, like other Biblical figures, played a critical role in God's plan. He endured hardship and delivering messages of both judgment and hope. His faithfulness in proclaiming God's Word despite personal and communal suffering aligns with the attributes celebrated in Hebrews 11. The vision of future restoration and the promise of renewal in Ezekiel's prophecies connect with the themes of hope and fulfillment seen in Hebrews 11. Just as the faithful in Hebrews 11 are commended for their hope in God's promises, Ezekiel's prophecies reflect hope in the eventual restoration of Israel and the realization of God's promises.

Ezekiel's Prophetic Call

Ezekiel 1:1-3 (KJ21) - "[1] Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River of Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. [2] On the fifth day of the month (which was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity), [3] the Word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him."

Prophet Ezekiel saw visions of God when he was among the captives by the River of Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans. God worked through Ezekiel when he was a foreign captive. When God wants to work in you, no boundaries and chains can block Him. The hand of God was there by the River Chebar upon Ezekiel. The Israelites had angered God to the point that God allowed them to

be taken into captivity. But Yahweh's love for them would not allow Him to leave them unattended. He had to raise a prophet for them to deliver to them His divine blessed message.

The Vision of the Four Living Creatures and the Wheels

In his prophetic call, Ezekiel saw a stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire and brilliant light, and the appearance of four living creatures (Ezekiel 1:4-14). Each creature has four faces (a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle) and four wings. Their legs are straight, and their feet are like those of a calf (Ezekiel 1:6-8).

Beside each creature is a wheel intersecting another wheel, and the wheels are full of eyes all around. These wheels move with the creatures, and the spirit of the creatures is in the wheels (Ezekiel 1:15-21). Above the creatures is a firmament, and above that, a throne with the appearance of a man. The vision concludes with a description of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:22-28).

God spoke to Ezekiel, addressing him as "son of man," and commissions him as a prophet to the Israelites. He was told to speak to the people whether they listen or not (Ezekiel 2:1-7). Ezekiel was given a scroll that is eaten, symbolizing that he must internalize the words of God. The scroll is sweet in his mouth but becomes bitter in his stomach, representing the mixed nature of the message (Ezekiel 3:1-3).

Ezekiel was appointed as a watchman for Israel. He was responsible for warning the wicked and the righteous of their deeds and the consequences (Ezekiel 3:16-21). Ezekiel was also shown visions of the glory of the Lord departing from the temple, illustrating the gravity of Israel's disobedience (Ezekiel 8-11).

Ezekiel 3:17 (KJV) - "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me."

God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman over Israel, emphasizing his responsibility to warn the people of impending judgment. The work of a watchman is to guard the master's property. Here we can see that God made Prophet Ezekiel a guardian over His people, the Israelites. His job was

to ensure that they were well taken care of. Taking care of them meant delivering God's message faithfully unto them.

A watchman guards against intruders trespassing on the master's property. Ezekiel was to help guard the Israelites against any intruding evil. He was to do this by telling them the truth. Truth guards because God is truth, and God is the ultimate protection.

Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:1 (KJ21) - "[1] The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, [2] and caused me to pass by them round about; and behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry. [3] And He said unto me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, Thou knowest.” [4] Again He said unto me, “Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, ‘O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. [5] Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. [6] And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.’” [7] So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. [8] And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. [9] Then said He unto me, “Prophesy unto the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, ‘Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’” [10] So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. [11] Then He said unto me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried and our hope is lost. We are cut off from our parts.’ [12] Therefore prophesy and say unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. [13] And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, [14] and shall put My Spirit in you and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land. Then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord.’”

Ezekiel received a vision from God where he witnessed the resurrection of dry bones, symbolizing the restoration of Israel. In the vision of the dry bones laid a message of hope and restoration for the Jewish nation. In the Bible we have records of people being raised from the dead. Jesus, when He was on this earth, raised Lazarus from the dead.

Lazarus had been dead for four days and his body had started to decompose. But he was still not yet in a skeleton state when Jesus raised him. We have many accounts in the Bible of the dead being raised, and the ones who were raised were those who were freshly dead.

Death has five stages, and the final stage is skeletonization. The fresh stage takes 1-2 days. At that stage, the body temperature drops, and rigor mortis sets in. Bloat stage takes 2-6 days. Here the body begins to swell due to the buildup of gases. Active decay takes 1-3 weeks. At this stage, major decomposition of soft tissues occurs; the body begins to collapse. Advanced decay takes 3 weeks to several months. In advanced decay, most soft tissues are decomposed; the body loses mass rapidly. Skeletonization happens several months or years after a person has died. Remaining tissues decompose, leaving only bones.

In the vision, Ezekiel saw these bones coming to life. When a person's body has reached the skeletonization stage, the people who were closest to him might have even forgotten him. The bones that Ezekiel saw were beyond the stage of skeletonization as they were dry bones. This means that they had not been in contact with the flesh of the body for quite some time. These bones were stored in a valley. A valley is a low-lying area of land situated between hills or mountains, typically formed by the erosion of the surrounding terrain. In other words, the bones were not just in a grave, they were in the lowest part of the land.

Imagine God taking skeletons from the lowest part of the land and bringing them back to life. First, it requires humility, sacrifice and great determination for someone to do that. God always goes out of His way to save and bless humanity. God could have spoken to the bones, but He did not do that. Instead, He commissioned Prophet Ezekiel to do it. Ezekiel was to rely on God's power to do that. Ellen G. White says, "His biddings are enablings." God did not leave Ezekiel clueless when he encountered the dry bones. He guided him on what to do. By following God's guidance step by step through the entire procedure, the dry bones were converted to living people.

When God tells you to do something, He gives you the power to obey that command. You will be successful because He has enabled you to do what He has bid you to do. It is a stupendous privilege when God gives us the commission to minister to His people. When we present God's Word to people, we bring life to them like Ezekiel did with the dry bones because God's Word is life. Through us, God will do mighty works for He wants the light from us to shine brighter than a blazing campfire on a moonless night.

The symbol of dry bones signifies that the person being revived is beyond hope. When a person dies, we feel sad mainly because we have no hope of seeing them again. When someone stays lifeless in the grave for a long time (to the point of skeletonization), we can never imagine that

person being resurrected. God in his impeccable and overflowing love, has not given up on anyone. If God has not given up on you, why should you give up on yourself? It makes no sense.

Prophesying Against Tyre

Ezekiel 28:2 (KJV) - "Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God."

In Hebrew, the name Tyre in Hebrew is צוֹר (Tsor), which means "rock" or "stone." This reflects the city's geographical and architectural features, as Tyre was originally situated on an island with a rocky coastline. In Phoenician, the city's (Tyre's) name was similar, אר□ (ṣwr), which also means "rock." This name underscores the city's fortified nature and its importance as a maritime and trading hub.

Tyre had several notable kings throughout its history. One of the most famous was Hiram I, who ruled during the time of King Solomon of Israel (10th century BCE) and is mentioned in the Bible as a contemporary and ally of Solomon. Another notable monarch was Pygmalion, who ruled during the late 4th century BCE, around the time of Alexander the Great's siege of Tyre.

But in the context of Ezekiel 28, the king of Tyre that is referred to is the Devil and it might also be a literal king. The chapter addresses the king of Tyre, criticizing him for his pride and self-deification. The language used reflects the king's arrogance and the ensuing judgment. For instance, Ezekiel 28:2 condemns the king's claim to be a god and his pride.

Ezekiel 28:11-19 describes the king of Tyre in highly exalted and metaphorical terms, such as being in Eden, the anointed cherub, and being perfect in beauty and wisdom. These descriptions are often seen as hyperbolic and symbolic, depicting the king's elevated status and subsequent fall. This is a prefiguration or typology of Satan's fall. The attributes and descriptions are seen as paralleling the story of Lucifer's pride and subsequent fall as described in other parts of the Bible, such as Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12.

Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre did happen, but the fulfillment was complex and occurred over an extended period. The prophecy, found in Ezekiel 26, 27, and 28, predicted significant judgment and destruction for the city. Here's how the prophecy's fulfillment unfolded:

- **Ezekiel 26** - This chapter foretells the complete destruction of Tyre. Ezekiel prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, would lay siege to the city and bring about its downfall.
- **Ezekiel 27** - This chapter provides a lament for Tyre, describing its fall as a loss for the nations that traded with it, emphasizing the city's former splendor and its subsequent ruin.
- **Ezekiel 28** - This chapter contains a dual prophecy—one against the king of Tyre, criticizing his pride and self-deification, and another describing the city's eventual desolation and the loss of its economic and political influence.

Historical Fulfillment

Nebuchadnezzar's Siege - The initial part of the prophecy about Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre is partially fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre from 586 to 573 BCE. However, Tyre was not completely destroyed by him. The city withstood the siege, and Nebuchadnezzar's forces did not entirely obliterate it.

Alexander the Great's Conquest - The more complete fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy occurred during the time of Alexander the Great. In 332 BCE, Alexander besieged Tyre, which had been rebuilt and was a prominent city on an island. Alexander's army constructed a causeway to the island and captured the city after a lengthy and brutal siege. The siege resulted in significant destruction and a considerable loss of life, fulfilling the prophecy's prediction of Tyre's downfall.

Desolation - The prophecy also foretold that Tyre would become a place for the spreading of nets, indicating desolation. Following Alexander's conquest, Tyre's prominence diminished. While it was rebuilt and continued to exist, it never regained its former status as a major maritime power.

The word Tyre might have been used in this context to refer to Satan and his kingdom because of its meaning. It means rock. This signifies its stability, as we often hear the sayings, "Firm as a

rock," or "Solid as a rock." Sin can make one think that they are stable, especially when they seem to prosper in their sins. Such people tend to misuse God's mercy and love.

Satan did and still does the same thing. In the end, Satan's kingdom will be destroyed just as the kingdom of Tyre was destroyed. The punishment that Satan will face for causing all these problems will be extremely great but at the same time just.

Prophesying Against Egypt

Ezekiel 29:2 (KJV) - "Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt."

Ezekiel 29:2 calls for a prophecy against Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and against Egypt as a whole. The reasons for this prophetic judgment can be understood in the context of the biblical narrative and historical events involving Egypt. Here's a detailed look into what Egypt did to call for such a prophecy:

The prophecy against Pharaoh is partly due to his boastful claims and arrogance. Pharaoh had viewed himself as a deity, asserting that he was the Nile and a god-like figure. This hubris was seen as an affront to God. Ezekiel 29:9 further emphasizes that Egypt's pride in its own strength and resources was a significant reason for the prophecy.

The Egyptians believed they were self-sufficient and independent, not recognizing their dependence on God. It is a grievous error to fail to acknowledge God and think of yourself as powerful enough to accomplish anything, even the slightest action like moving your finger or tongue. It is quite common to hear people saying things like, "I did it by myself."

We do not have power on our own over anything or to do anything. Peter was so overconfident that he would not deny Jesus but when the test came, he failed. He denied Jesus three times. Most Christians can attest that when they portray overconfidence in themselves not to fall in a certain temptation, they end up falling to a worse degree than they had ever thought. God might have allowed this to happen to make you know that He is the One in control. He does this so that you can learn your lesson and turn to Him for help.

Egypt's role as an adversary to Israel is highlighted here in Ezekiel 29:6. Egypt was a frequent antagonist of Israel, often aligning against the Israelites and contributing to their suffering. In Ezekiel 30:4-5, Egypt was involved in conflicts and alliances that negatively affected Israel. Its political and military actions were perceived as harmful to the people of God. When you fight against the people of God, you are fighting against God. When you fight against God, you are wasting time fighting a losing battle because you cannot win against God.

Ezekiel 29:18 refers to Egypt's involvement in the siege of Tyre. Egypt's efforts in assisting Tyre against Babylon were viewed unfavorably. This is because Tyre was also an enemy of Israel, and such alliances were seen as acts of defiance against God's will. Egypt's idolatry and rejection of the true God are mentioned as reasons for divine judgment (Ezekiel 30:13-14).

Do not partner with anyone whose mission is to rival against God. Be loyal to God like how men are loyal to their barbers. Partner with God in everything that you do. In your business, in employment, in your family, in your education etc. If you do so you can be certain that you are on the path to eternal prosperity. Do not be on the same team as Satan. This means that you should not work in a company that goes against the principles of God's Word no matter how lucrative the salary is.

In one of our Bible study sessions, a lady who works for a media company told us that betting companies offer the highest commissions to sales media people. She went on to tell us that those people earning all that money from betting companies do not know how that money ends up. Most of them involve themselves in partying heavily and profligate living.

In another Bible study session, a friend mentioned someone he knows who is working for a tobacco company. He said that the person was such a committed Christian in university and the university church elder for that matter. After getting that job, he started compromising on the Sabbath and stopped going to church. All that culminated in alcoholism and drunkenness. The Devil's trap has many lucrative things. Do not fall inside it. In fact, you may not even know what the trap is. You need the power of God to make you leap successfully over those traps.

The worship of false gods and the failure to recognize the sovereignty of Yahweh led to Egypt's downfall. Pharaoh is described as a "young lion" among the nations, but his idolatry and false claims led to his eventual defeat and desolation (Ezekiel 32:2).

The prophecy against Egypt was fulfilled in several stages. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is mentioned in the context of Egypt's downfall, was the instrument through which this judgment was executed. Egypt faced invasions and defeats by Babylon and later by other powers such as the Persians. The prophecy includes the prediction of Egypt's desolation. Historically, Egypt's power and influence waned significantly after these prophetic events, leading to a period of diminished prominence.

Symbolic Acts and Parables

Ezekiel performed various symbolic acts and parables as directed by God to convey profound messages to the people. For example, Ezekiel shaved his head and beard, divided his hair, and portrayed the siege of Jerusalem using a brick (Ezekiel 4-5).

Ezekiel 4:1-8 (AMP) - "[1] Now you, son of man, take a brick, place it before you and inscribe on it [a diagram of] the city of Jerusalem. [2] Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise a ramp against it; set up [enemy] camps and place battering rams all around it. [3] Further, take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel. [4] "Then lie down on your left side (toward the north) to bear [symbolically] the wickedness and punishment of the house of Israel. You shall bear their wickedness and punishment for the number of days that you lie on your side. [5] For I have assigned you the years of their wickedness and punishment, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days [representing three hundred and ninety years]; in this way you shall bear [symbolically] the wickedness and punishment of the house of Israel. [6] When you have completed these [days for Israel], lie down again, but on your right side (toward the south), and you shall bear the wickedness and punishment of the house of Judah forty days. I have assigned you one day for each year. [7] Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it. [8] Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege."

God is long suffering towards us (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, we should be patient with other people. Being the followers of Christ, we are required to walk as He walked. Picture that you are one of

the disciples physically walking with Jesus as He leads the way. As you walk with Him, you encounter the same things on the path that He encounters.

If there is a mountain that you would have to go over on the way, you will have to climb it together. If there are oceans that need to be crossed, you will cross them together. If there are thorns on the way, you will experience them together. When you are walking with a human friend, the walk becomes less challenging than it would have been if you had walked alone. If you are climbing a mountain together or doing other excursions, your friend will encourage you to continue. Therefore, you will not give up easily.

Walking with your human friend is often easy even though your human friend has no power to give you. Jesus Christ has all the power (Matthew 28:18). After stating that He has all power, He commanded His disciples to go and teach all nations (because His power would be with them). In those days, it was not easy to go from one country to another as it is now, especially across seas. One would get tired of traveling to all nations. However, with the power of Jesus it was easy for His followers to go to distant lands and spread the gospel. God is all powerful and He will give you His power to serve and glorify Him. With His power, you will do more than you have ever imagined.

Ezekiel was God's prophet. God bears our sins. God wanted to give Ezekiel a little experience of how it feels to bear other people's sins. God told Ezekiel that he will bear the wickedness and punishment of the people for the number of days that he will lie on his side. Human beings are the burden of Jesus Christ. Genuine followers of Christ ought to have other people as their burden. This calls for sacrificial living. When you agree to follow Christ, you have agreed to live a life of sacrifice.

Many people might read this and get scared and be reluctant to join Christianity. The good news is that the sacrificial life which you have agreed to is the most blessed life you can ever have. This is because selflessness and humility bring you exceptional joy. Most of us think we are going to be happy when we satisfy our desires.

We buy the best meal from our favorite restaurants, and we think that it is going to bring us happiness. After we are done eating it, we crave another one and it doesn't always make us as happy as we had previously expected. If the meal is unhealthy, it will contribute to boosting bad

moods in us. Some people are angry, and they don't know why they are angry. Their anger might have resulted from eating unhealthy meals. When I eat less, I find myself more energetic compared to when I eat more. When we share in the affliction of others, we help them in improving their lives. As we share in their troubles, our troubles are lessened. The light we shine on them is reflected to us.

Ezekiel 5:1-17 (AMP) - "[1] And you [Ezekiel], son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor and shave your head and your beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair [into three parts]. [2] You shall burn one third with fire in the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike it with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. [3] Also take some of them and bind them in the edges of your robes. [4] Again take some hair and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel. [5] "Thus says the Lord God, 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations, and countries are around her. [6] And she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the [pagan] nations and against My statutes more than the countries that are around her; for Israel has rejected My ordinances and has not walked in My statutes.' [7] Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you and have not walked in My statutes, nor kept My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you,' [8] therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I, I Myself, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. [9] And because of all your abominations, I will do among you that which I have not done, and the like of which I will not do again. [10] Therefore, fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on you and I will scatter to all the winds the remnant of you. [11] So, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you and withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare [you]. [12] One third of you will die of virulent disease or be consumed by famine among you; one third will fall by the sword around you; and one third I will scatter to all the winds, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. [13] 'Thus My anger will come to an end and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know [without any doubt] that I the Lord have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath on them. [14] Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a disgrace among the nations which surround you and in the sight of all who pass

by. [15] So it will be a disgrace, a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the [pagan] nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger and in wrath and in raging reprimands—I, the Lord, have spoken. [16] When I send against them the deadly arrows of hunger which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will increase the famine upon you and break your staff of bread. [17] Further, I will send against you hunger and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; virulent disease and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the Lord, have spoken.'"

In this passage, God commands the prophet Ezekiel to perform a symbolic act as a representation of His coming judgment on Jerusalem. Ezekiel is instructed to take a sharp sword and use it as a razor to shave his head and beard, an act of extreme mourning and humiliation. The shaved hair is then divided into three parts, each symbolizing the fate of the people of Jerusalem:

First Part: Ezekiel is to burn one-third of the hair in the center of the city, symbolizing those who will perish in the city due to famine and disease during the siege.

Second Part: Another third is to be struck with the sword all around the city, representing those who will be killed by the sword during the Babylonian invasion.

Third Part: The final third is to be scattered to the wind, symbolizing those who will be exiled and dispersed among the nations. God also declares that He will unsheathe a sword behind them, indicating that even in exile, they will not escape violence and death.

God goes ahead to instruct Ezekiel to take a few strands of the hair and bind them to the edges of his robes, representing a small remnant that will be preserved. However, even some of these will be cast into the fire, symbolizing further destruction that will spread to all of Israel.

No matter how sinful the world is, God always has a remnant among His people. They might be a few, but they are there. Such people, God holds them as His own special possession and favors them greatly. It does not take much to be among those whom God holds as peculiar treasures, whom He has placed on eagles' wings. All it takes is submission to God's will and yielding to His control.

God explains that Jerusalem, which He set at the center of the nations, has rebelled against His laws more wickedly than the surrounding pagan nations. As a result, He will execute a severe

judgment in Jerusalem in the sight of the nations, unlike anything that has occurred before or will occur again. The judgment will include horrifying acts such as parents eating their children and vice versa, reflecting the extreme conditions during the siege.

These prophecies happened. Since the Jews did not learn their lesson during the Babylonian siege, similar events happened to them during the Roman siege. We can see the evidence in the writings of the secular historian Flavian Josephus. In his book, “The Jewish War,” Josephus describes the extreme conditions in Jerusalem during the Roman siege, where starvation was extremely severe that some inhabitants resorted to eating their own children. He recounts the story of a woman named Mary of Bethezuba, who, driven by starvation, killed and roasted her infant son, consuming part of the body and offering the rest to others. When you obey God, God uses you as an example of a blessed life. When you disobey God, God uses you as an example of a cursed life.

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The Parable of the Vine: A Warning Against Rebellion

Ezekiel 17:7-10 (AMP) - “[7] There was [also] another great eagle with great wings and many feathers; and behold, this vine (Zedekiah) bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him, away from the beds where it was planted, for him to water. [8] It was planted in good soil where water was plentiful for it to produce leaves and branches and to bear fruit, so that it might become a splendid vine.”’ [9] Thus says the Lord God, ‘Ask, “Will it thrive? Will he (Nebuchadnezzar) not uproot it and strip off its fruit so that all its sprouting leaves will wither? It

will not take a strong arm or many people to uproot it [ending Israel's national existence]. [10] Though it is planted, will it thrive and grow? Will it not completely wither when the east wind touches it? It will wither in the beds where it grew."""

Nebuchadnezzar was the great eagle being talked about here and he had great wings, meaning he had a great ability to fly. He had a rich plumage of many colors, which means that him and his kingdom were extremely attractive to look at.

The "vine" symbolizes Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, and the nation of Judah itself. The "vine" was meant to remain loyal to Babylon (symbolized by the first eagle), but instead, it "bent its roots" toward another great eagle, representing Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt, seeking an alliance with Egypt against Babylon.

The Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar will uproot that vine and strip off its fruit so that all its sprouting leaves will wither. It goes on to say that it will not take a strong arm or many people to uproot it. It won't take much to uproot the vine because its roots have not grown deep enough. This allegory of the vine that is easily uprooted is like the chaff that the wind drives away that is used in Psalm 1:4 to describe the ungodly. It is also like the heath in the desert that is compared to the people who put their trust in other people (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

The vine that is easily uprooted means, when one lives in disobedience to God, being hard hearted to obey His commands, it does not take much effort to bring them down. Your sins will cause your downfall, no matter the lofty position you assume in society.

Ezekiel 17:11-21 (KJV) - "[11] Moreover, the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, [12] "Say now to the rebellious house, 'Do you not know (realize) what these things mean?' Tell them, 'Hear this, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took its king [Jehoiachin] and its princes and brought them with him to Babylon. [13] And he took a member of the royal family [the king's uncle, Zedekiah] and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took the important leaders of the land, [14] so that the kingdom would be in subjection, unable to restore itself and rise again, but that by keeping his covenant it might continue. [15] But Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar by sending his ambassadors to Egypt so that they might give him horses and many troops. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant [with Babylon] and [still] escape? [16] As I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely in the country

of the king (Nebuchadnezzar) who made Zedekiah [the vassal] king, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon Zedekiah shall die. [17] Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they (the Babylonians) put up ramps and build siege walls to destroy many lives. [18] Now Zedekiah dishonored the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand and pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape.'" [19] Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "As I live, I will bring down on his own head My oath [made on My behalf by Nebuchadnezzar] which Zedekiah dishonored and My covenant which he broke. [20] I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare; and I will bring him to Babylon and will enter into judgment with him there for his treason which he has committed against Me. [21] All the choice men [from Judah] in all his troops will fall by the sword, and those that survive will be scattered to every wind; and you will know [without any doubt] that I the Lord have spoken.""

The King of Babylon (King Nebuchadnezzar) went to Jerusalem and took King Jehoiachin. He took Jehoiachin and his princes to Babylon. He also took the king's uncle Zedekiah and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took the important leaders of the land, so that the kingdom would be in subjection to him, unable to restore itself. King Nebuchadnezzar made a covenant with Zedekiah. He did not want the kingdom to die completely. Instead, wanted the kingdom to continue by keeping his covenant. King Nebuchadnezzar did not want the kingdom to restore itself and rise again.

However, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, so that they may give him horses and many troops. By rebelling against God and against Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah would die in Babylon. Pharaoh with his mighty army would not help Zedekiah in the war against the Babylonians. God promised to spread His net over Zedekiah and cause all his troops to fall by the sword, and those that survived to be scattered to every wind.

Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Tree

Ezekiel 17:22-24 (KJV) - "[22] Thus says the Lord God, "I Myself will take a twig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. [23] I will plant it on the mountain heights of Israel, that it may grow boughs and bear fruit and be a noble and stately cedar. And birds of every kind will live under it; they will nest [securely] in the shade of its branches. [24] All the trees of the field will

know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will fulfill it.”"

God will take a twig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out. God will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. God wants it to grow boughs and bear fruit and be a noble and stately cedar. Birds of every kind will live under it; they will rest securely in the shade of its branches. God brings down the tall tree, exalts the low tree, dries up the green tree and makes the dry tree flourish.

God says He will take a "twig from the lofty top of the cedar" and plant it. The "cedar" often symbolizes the royal house of David, representing kingship and authority. The "twig" refers to a descendant of David, specifically the Messiah, whom God will establish as the ruler. This is a prophecy about the coming of Jesus Christ, who is from the lineage of David.

God will plant this "twig" on the "mountain heights of Israel," signifying the establishment of a strong and enduring kingdom. The "mountain" often represents the place of God's presence and rule. The reference to the tree growing, bearing fruit, and becoming a "noble and stately cedar" speaks to the strength, expansion, and influence of Christ's kingdom. The birds nesting in the tree symbolizes people from all nations finding refuge and security in this kingdom.

God declares that He will "bring down the tall tree" and "exalt the low tree," indicating that He will humble the proud and elevate the humble. This is consistent with the biblical theme of God lifting the humble and bringing down the powerful who are opposed to Him. The imagery of drying up the green tree and making the dry tree flourish further emphasizes God's sovereign power to reverse human expectations and accomplish His purposes.

Ezekiel's Vision of the New Temple

Ezekiel 43:4 (KJV) - "And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east."

Ezekiel received a vision of a future temple, providing detailed descriptions of its measurements and features.

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Purpose of the Temple

Divine Presence

Ezekiel 43:7 (KJV) - “And He said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places.”

Worship and Sacrifice

Ezekiel 43:18 (KJV) - “And He said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon.”

Restoration

Ezekiel 37:27 (KJV) - “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Description of the Temple

Ezekiel 40:2-4 (NKJV) - “[2] In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. [3] He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway. [4] And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.”

Dimensions and Layout

The Outer Wall and Gateway

Outer Wall: The temple complex was surrounded by an outer wall that measured 500 cubits by 500 cubits, creating a square perimeter around the temple area (Ezekiel 40:5).

Eastern Gate: The main entrance to the temple was the eastern gate, which had a threshold, steps, and guardrooms. The gateway is 25 cubits wide and 50 cubits long (Ezekiel 40:6-16).

The Courtyards

Outer Court: After entering through the eastern gate, there was an outer court with thirty chambers along the perimeter. The court is paved, and the gates of the outer court face east, north, and south (Ezekiel 40:17-19).

Inner Court: Inside the outer court is the inner court, accessible via gates from the north, south, and east. The inner court is higher than the outer court, with steps leading up to it. The inner court is higher symbolizing that the closer you get to God, the higher you will go in life. The inner court contained the altar and the priests' chambers (Ezekiel 40:28-37).

The Temple Building

The Porch (Entrance Hall): The entrance to the temple itself included a porch, measuring 20 cubits wide and 11 cubits deep (Ezekiel 40:48-49).

The Holy Place: Inside the temple, the Holy Place is 40 cubits long and 20 cubits wide (Ezekiel 41:2).

The Most Holy Place: The innermost part of the temple is the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies), measuring 20 cubits by 20 cubits, with walls that are 6 cubits thick (Ezekiel 41:3-4).

Side Chambers: Three Stories of Side Chambers: Surrounding the temple on three sides are three stories of side chambers, which were used for storage and other purposes. The side chambers increase in width with each ascending level (Ezekiel 41:5-11). As you get closer to God, you go higher. As you go higher, you gain more capacity to store God’s blessings just as the storage (side) chambers would increase in width with each ascending level.

The Altar and the Vestibule

The Altar: In the inner court, directly in front of the temple, is the altar, which is central to the worship in the temple (Ezekiel 40:47).

This vision of the temple in Ezekiel is highly detailed and symbolic, representing a restored relationship between God and His people. The measurements and descriptions emphasize the order, holiness, and separateness of this future temple, which differs from the previous temples in Jerusalem.

Rituals and Offerings

Ezekiel 44:15-16 (KJV) - "[15] But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD: they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: [16] They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge."

Ezekiel's Vision of the River of Life

Ezekiel 47:1-12 (AMP) - "[1] Then he [my guide] brought me back to the door of the house [the temple of the Lord]; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house (temple) toward the east, for the front of the temple was facing east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. [2] Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by the way of the gate that faces east. And behold, water was spurting out from the south side [of the gate]. [3] When the man

went out toward the east with a measuring line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water that was ankle-deep. [4] Again he measured a thousand [cubits] and led me through the water, water that was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand [cubits] and led me through the water, water reaching the hips. [5] Again he measured a thousand [cubits]; and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be crossed [by wading]. [6] And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me back to the bank of the river. [7] Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. [8] Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah (the Jordan Valley); then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the Dead Sea shall be healed and become fresh. [9] It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be a very great number of fish, because these waters go there so that the waters of the sea are healed and become fresh; so everything will live wherever the river goes. [10] And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it [at the banks of the Dead Sea]; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be dry places to spread nets. Their fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great [Mediterranean] Sea. [11] But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh [and wholesome for animal life]; they will [as the river subsides] be left encrusted with salt. [12] By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They shall bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

This passage describes a vision of a miraculous river flowing from the temple in Jerusalem, gradually increasing in depth as it moves eastward. The river symbolizes God's life-giving presence and blessing:

Water from the Temple: The water originates from the temple, which represents the dwelling place of God. The flowing water signifies the life, healing, and restoration that comes from God. There are blessings in church. There are blessings in fellowship that are always ever flowing and overflowing. The blessings that come from worshiping God are non-stop, that is why the water is not stagnant, it keeps on flowing.

Increasing Depth: The increasing depth of the water as it flows suggests the ever-growing and expanding influence of God's grace and blessings. God's grace and blessings never end. The more Ezekiel walked in the water, the more he got covered by the water. At the beginning his entire body was not covered, only his legs were covered.

When Ezekiel walked, the water kept on increasing and it continued to cover more parts of his body. When we walk with God, we receive healing. The healing and the blessings keep on increasing as we increase in depth and breadth of the study of God's Word.

Healing Waters: As the river flows into the Dead Sea, it transforms the salty, lifeless waters into fresh water, teeming with life. This symbolizes the power of God to bring life and healing even to the most desolate and dead areas and people. The salty water turning to fresh shows how purified one's life gets when they get close to God.

God is life. Therefore, when God connects with something or someone, He brings life to that thing or to that person. Nothing created by God is useless. Therefore, involve God in everything that you do so that He can bring life to your ventures.

Fruitful Trees: The trees growing on both sides of the river represent prosperity and continual nourishment from God. Their leaves and fruit symbolize spiritual sustenance and healing for the people.

Overall, this vision points to a future time when God's presence will bring unparalleled blessing, healing, and life to His people and their land.

Ezekiel 47:13-23 (AMP) - "[13] Thus says the Lord God, "This shall be the boundary by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph shall have two portions. [14] You shall divide it as an inheritance, each one equally with the other. I lifted up My hand and swore to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as an inheritance. [15] "And this shall be the boundary of the land on the north side: from the Great [Mediterranean] Sea by way of Hethlon to the entrance of Zedad, [16] Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; [as far as] Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. [17] So the boundary will extend from the [Mediterranean] Sea to Hazar-enan at the border of Damascus, and on the north, northward, is the border of Hamath. This is the north side. [18] "The east side, from between Hauran, Damascus, Gilead, and the land of Israel, shall be the

Jordan; from the north border to the eastern sea you shall measure. This is the east side. [19] "The south side, southward, from Tamar [near the Dead Sea] shall extend as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the Brook of Egypt and to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea. This is the south side toward the south. [20] "The west side shall be the Great [Mediterranean] Sea, from the south border to a point opposite Lebo-hamath [north of Mount Hermon]. This is the west side. [21] "So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. [22] You shall divide it by lot as an inheritance among yourselves and among the foreigners who stay among you, who give birth to sons among you. They shall be to you as the native-born [in the country] among the children (descendants) of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. [23] In whatever tribe the foreigner resides, there shall you give him his inheritance," says the Lord God."

In this section, God outlines the boundaries of the land that will be inherited by the twelve tribes of Israel. The boundaries are described in detail, and the division of the land reflects the restoration of Israel to its promised inheritance:

Joseph's Two Portions: Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, each receive a portion, reflecting the division of Joseph's inheritance into two tribes.

Divine Allocation: The land is divided by lot among the tribes, demonstrating that the division is according to God's will and plan.

Inclusion of Foreigners: Remarkably, this passage includes a provision for foreigners living among the Israelites to receive an inheritance alongside the tribes. This inclusion emphasizes God's justice and the openness of His kingdom to all who live among His people.

It is a blessing to have a close friendship with genuine Christians. It is like a yawn that spreads across the room, effortlessly passing from one to another. It is like laughter at a comedy show - once it starts, it's impossible not to join in. It is like a spark that lights a fire; once it catches, it spreads quickly and brightly. It is also like a smile that spreads through a crowd—simple, genuine, and impossible to resist.

Ensure the people in your inner circle are genuine Christians who are always yearning to know more about God and to follow His will.

Ezekiel 48:1-9 (AMP) - "[1] Now these are the names of the tribes: from the north end, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan, which is on the northern border of Damascus, beside Hamath, and running from the east to the west, Dan, one portion. [2] Beside the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one portion. [3] Beside the border of Asher, from the east side to the west side, Naphtali, one portion. [4] Beside the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one portion. [5] Beside the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Ephraim, one portion. [6] Beside the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one portion. [7] Beside the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one portion. [8] "And beside the border of Judah, from the east side to the west side, shall be the allotment and contribution of land which you shall set apart and offer, 25,000 cubits in width, and in length like one of the [tribal] portions, from the east side to the west side; and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. [9] The allotment [of land] that you shall set apart and offer to the Lord shall be 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in width."

This section continues the description of the division of the land among the tribes of Israel. Each tribe receives a specific portion of land, with the details laid out from north to south:

Tribal Inheritance: Each tribe receives a portion of the land, emphasizing the restoration and reestablishment of Israel according to the divine plan.

The Portion for the Sanctuary: The land set apart for the Lord, where the sanctuary will be located, is highlighted. This area is central to the vision, underscoring the importance of worship and the presence of God among His people.

Ezekiel walked in faithful obedience to God through God's enabling, demonstrating a steadfast commitment despite challenging circumstances. His life reflects how we can live our own lives in faith by trusting in God's power and guidance, even when faced with trials or uncertainty.

Just as Ezekiel's obedience was rooted in his reliance on God's strength, we too can find assurance and courage in our faith by depending on God's promises and allowing His Spirit to lead and empower us. By embracing God's call and surrendering to His will, we can navigate our own journeys with the same unwavering faith and dedication that characterized Ezekiel's walk with God.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for enabling me to come across these lessons from the book of Ezekiel. I ask You to forgive me for all the sins that I have committed. Help me to take heed of all Your warnings. Give me the strength to overcome temptations. Purify me, Lord. Make me a new being and help me not to miss eternal life. Give healing to my soul and body. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Reflect on what God is warning you from doing and ask Him to give you the strength not to do it.
2. Reflect on the areas of your life that seem lifeless. Write them down and ask God to put life into them.
3. Commit or recommit your life to Jesus Christ.

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CHAPTER 70

THE FAITH OF DANIEL

In the courts of kings, where pride was adorned,

The best of Judah, in Babylon's bond,

Daniel's faith, firm than mountain's stone,

Declared before the king, he will serve God alone.

Daniel, the dreamer, with visions so clear,

Spoke truth, did truth, nothing to fear,

God's Word his weapon, he needed no spear,

Did not take the king's meat, nor the king's beer.

"But there is a God in heaven," he would boldly proclaim,

Who reveals the mysteries and calls men by name,

Not by might nor his own wisdom's claim,

But by the Spirit, he rose to fame.

Thrown to the den where lions did wait,

To devour whoever had an unlucky fate,

God was with Daniel, he never lost his faith,

God came through at the right time, God is never late.

So let us be like Daniel, unyielding, bold,

A vessel of truth in a world grown cold.

"The wise shall shine as the stars on high,"

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For those who turn to righteousness never die.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Background of Daniel

The name Daniel comes from the Hebrew דָּנִיֵּאל (Dāniyyēl), which means "God is my judge" or "God has judged." It is derived from two parts:

דָּן (Dan) – meaning "judge" or "judgment."

אֵל (El) – meaning "God."

Together, the names reflect a recognition of God's authority as the ultimate judge and arbiter. This meaning aligns with the character of the biblical prophet Daniel, who is portrayed as a righteous and faithful servant of God, trusting in God's judgment and guidance, even in the face of great trials.

Daniel was a Jewish prophet and statesman during the Babylonian exile, known for his unwavering faith in God amidst pagan surroundings. The Book of Daniel is a blend of historical narrative and apocalyptic visions, detailing both his personal experiences and future prophecies.

Historical Context

Babylonian Exile: Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 BC during the first deportation of Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. He and other young men from the Jewish nobility were selected for their intellect and potential to serve in the Babylonian court.

Babylonian and Persian Empires: Daniel's life spanned the reigns of several kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Great. He served in high-ranking positions under both Babylonian and Persian rule.

Cultural and Religious Challenges: Daniel and his friends faced immense pressure to conform to Babylonian culture and religion but remained steadfast in their devotion to God.

Structure of the Book of Daniel

Chapters 1-6: Historical narratives that recount the personal trials and triumphs of Daniel and his friends, including the famous stories of the fiery furnace and the lions' den.

Chapters 7-12: Apocalyptic visions that reveal future events concerning the kingdoms of the world and God's ultimate plan for history.

Hebrews 11 celebrates the faith of Biblical figures who demonstrated extraordinary trust in God despite significant challenges. Daniel and his friends epitomize this faith through their actions and experiences. Daniel's unwavering faith led him to continue praying to God despite a decree forbidding it.

Daniel received and shared profound visions of God's future plans, which included promises of deliverance and the establishment of God's kingdom. Despite being in a foreign land and facing continuous challenges to his faith, Daniel's strength and influence grew because of his reliance on God.

Daniel’s life and the lives of his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are vivid illustrations of the faith celebrated in Hebrews 11. Their experiences in the lions' den, the fiery furnace, and the courts of Babylonian and Persian kings showcase their unwavering faith in God. Despite immense pressure to conform, threats to their lives, and the allure of power and prestige, they remained true to their faith, demonstrating righteousness, courage, and trust in God's promises.

Their stories serve as powerful examples of faith that "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire," and "escaped the edge of the sword," embodying the essence of Hebrews 11:32-35.

Daniel's Commitment to God's Diet

Daniel 1:8 (KJV) - "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." (Daniel 1:8, KJV)

Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat and wine. It is widely believed that the food on the king’s table is the best food in the land. The king’s meal is usually the priciest, as one cannot bring cheap things to the king’s

table. When presented, it looks beautiful, royal, ambrosial, delectable, luscious, saccharine, and dulcet**.**

Many would want to access the king's food but unfortunately, they cannot. Some would even be willing to eat it even if they are told that it is infiltrated with poison. They would love their eulogies to be read that they died eating the king's food. Daniel and his allies were different. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself by eating the king's meat.

The king at that time was Nebuchadnezzar, possibly the most powerful king the world has ever seen (as he is symbolized in the statue of Daniel with the head of gold, gold being superior to all the other metals in the statue). He had conquered the entire world, taking nations to captivity including the nation of Judah which Daniel and his friends came from. He was not democratic. He ruled with an iron fist, killing whoever he felt like (Daniel 5:19).

Daniel stood his ground because he understood that the best that the world has to offer is not good enough for God's children. He understood that the king's diet is high but the diet that God taught him to eat was higher. He understood that even though Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the world, he had not conquered God, the Creator of the World. He maintained the high Godly standards that he had learned back at home in the land of the Chaldeans.

Daniel's character is very peculiar. There are certain things I do not normally eat but I used to find myself eating them for social purposes. I did not want to look like the odd one out in front of the crowd. Therefore, I would easily consent to eating them to fit in the social circle. The crowd I was trying to please was not even a royal crowd, it was a normal crowd with peers that were about the same level and age as me. I told my friend Richard that I eat certain things for social purposes, and he told me, "Do not do things for social purposes." That single statement greatly influenced my eating habits. When I am about to eat something for social purposes, I remember that statement.

When people (mostly students) from a rural area come to an urban area, probably to school, they adopt harmful habits that they once loathed to fit in with the urban crowd. Many young boys have gotten into drugs and crime because of that. Many young ladies have gotten into prostitution because of that. Their urge to fit in makes them overdo those things to a greater extent than those who taught them. This is also common with people from a poor background trying to fit in with those from a rich background.

Daniel showed faith when he refused the best at the high table and chose to eat from the higher table which was God's table. He chose to honor God even while in captivity at the very risk of his life. He was willing to honor God even if it meant losing his life.

What did God do?

Daniel 1:9 (KJ21) - "Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

When God saw Daniel's faith, He brought him to favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Many Christians ask God for favor but are unwilling to show faith in God. Faith in God gives you favor in the eyes of the people whom God has chosen to favor you. You sometimes feel that you have liked someone for no reason. That might be God enabling you to favor that person. Follow God's direction to guide you on how to be a blessing to that person. As you trust God for favor, be willing to do everything He tells you to do, including the things you don't like. Like Daniel, do the righteous things that others find difficult to do. The good news is that it is easy through Christ who works in you.

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Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:28 (KJV) - "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

The king had called all the wise men, magicians and soothsayers to tell him the dream and to give him the interpretation. The king could not remember the dream and he expected those people to tell him. He promised to give them a great reward if they told him. However, if they did not tell him he threatened to punish them severely by killing them.

The king was troubled by a dream which he had forgotten. Therefore, he demanded that someone should tell him the dream before telling him the interpretation. The greatest wise people and magicians of Babylon could not do that. They demanded to be told the dream so that they could give the king the interpretation.

The king could not remember the dream; therefore, he could not tell them what he dreamt. Secondly, he knew that if he told them the dream, they will manipulate the interpretation and tell him a wrong one. Since they were not able to, the king was so furious that he commanded that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed (Daniel 2:12). This clearly shows that the Devil has limited powers. When Nebuchadnezzar ordered the execution of all the wise men, Daniel sought mercy and time for an interpretation (Daniel 2:15-16).

Daniel, by God's revelation, interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the great statue. Daniel started by honoring God before the pagan king, acknowledging that it is God who has the power to reveal secrets and not himself. If you honor God before people, He will honor you before them. If you glorify God before people, He will glorify you before them.

Daniel told the King the fact that he could interpret the dream does not make him more special than any other human being (Daniel 2:30). This showed humility. Many people are boastful about the gifts that God has given them. Instead of using their gifts to bless others, they use them to feel more special than others.

Daniel told the king the dream which he had dreamt and told him the interpretation. He told him of the statue that had a head of fine gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet that were partly iron and partly clay (Daniel 2:32-33). He gave him the interpretation and told him that the various metals on the body of the statue represented the various kingdoms with the Kingdom of Babylon being the head of gold (Daniel 2:38-45).

King Nebuchadnezzar was extremely delighted. He made Daniel a great man and gave him many great gifts. He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. When Daniel received all that, he was not selfish for he thought of his friends. He requested the king to promote his friends as well. When you get something good, do you think of your friends? Many love to hide lucrative opportunities from their friends so that they can be ahead of their friends and their friends can be astonished of their achievements.

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Interpreting the Handwriting on the Wall

Daniel 5:25-28 (KJ21) – “[25] And this is the writing that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. [26] This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. [27] TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. [28] PERES: Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Daniel interpreted the mysterious writing on the wall during Belshazzar's feast. Belshazzar had dishonored the vessels of the temple. Using them to drink wine and make merry with his friends. King Nebuchadnezzar did not do that. He showed honor to those vessels by taking them from the house of God to the house of his god. At that time, he did not know the true God. He thought that his god was the true god. Since he understood his god to be the most holy, he saw it noble to store those vessels in the house of his god. He knew that those vessels were sacred.

Belshazzar did not care. To him, those holy golden and silver cups were normal cups that could be used to drink wine. He made a feast and invited his wives, his princes, and his concubines and gave them the vessels to drink from (Daniel 5:2-3). While drinking wine, they praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone (Daniel 5:4).

In the same hour, four fingers of a man's hand came and wrote over against the candlestick upon the wall of the king's palace (Daniel 5:5). The king called all the wise men, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers but none could tell him what the writing meant (Daniel 5:7-8). The queen recommended Daniel to the king and Daniel was called (Daniel 5:10-13).

Daniel correctly interpreted the writings and told the king that God had numbered his kingdom and finished it. He (Belshazzar) has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. His kingdom was already divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Those writings were in Aramaic, a language that is closely related to Hebrew, commonly spoken in the ancient Near East.

What did Belshazzar do after hearing those words?

Daniel 5:29 (KJ21) – "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet and put a chain of gold about his neck and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Belshazzar commanded Daniel to be clothed in scarlet and to be adorned with a golden chain around his neck. He also proclaimed that Daniel should be the third ruler in the kingdom. Upon hearing the very 'hurting' truth that his days in the kingdom are over, Belshazzar gave Daniel great gifts. He did not harm him as is expected when you tell someone such hurtful words.

You are missing many gifts when you fail to speak the truth or when you delay speaking the truth. Not just material gifts but also spiritual gifts. Daniel was promoted because of speaking the truth.

Truth promotes you while error demotes you. Speaking the truth will always lift you. Speaking error or choosing to keep quiet when you are called to speak the truth, will surely drown you.

Daniel 5:30 (KJ21) – “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”

That very same night after Daniel had told the interpretation of the writings on the wall, Belshazzar the Babylonian king was slain. Darius the Median took over at around the age of sixty-two (Daniel 5:31).

In the Lion’s Den

Daniel 6:10 (KJV) - "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God."

Daniel continued to pray to God despite the king's decree. A decree had been issued because Daniel was preferred by the king more than all other presidents and princes. Daniel was favored by the king because he had a spirit of excellence (Daniel 6:2-3).

The presidents and princes plotted against Daniel because they were envious of him, but they could find no fault (Daniel 6:4). Therefore, the only way they could attack him was through the law of his god (Daniel 6:5). Therefore, together they formed a decree that whosoever shall be seen worshiping any other god besides Darius shall be thrown to the lion's den (Daniel 6:6-7). They gave the decree to Darius, and he signed it (Daniel 6:8-9).

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and prayed to God (Daniel 6:10). Most people would not have done that. Their carnal minds would direct them to go to the king and question him why he signed the decree. Some would plot evil against those people who have plotted evil against them.

Daniel sought God first. He knew that the only person who could help him was God. We rarely have God as the first option. We go to Him as the last option after all the other options have failed. We would save a lot of time by seeking God first before doing something. He would direct us whether to do that thing or not. If it is something that He wants us to do, He will give us the directions of doing.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV) says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." God's will should be first, last, and best in your life. No other word should be followed, only God's. Daniel did not give up and did not fear the king's decree. He continued praying three times a day (Daniel 6:10). He did not hide when praying. He prayed when his windows were open (Daniel 6:10).

Many Christians, especially young Christians try their best to hide their Christianity. When faced with opposition against our Christianity we should rise with greater power than before. This is because we are filled with the Holy Spirit's fire which cannot be quenched by anything. When the men saw Daniel praying, they went to the king and reported him. Therefore, Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. King Darius felt sorrow for Daniel and went to check on him the next day.

Daniel told him that God had sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths. Thus, they did not hurt him (Daniel 6:22). The king was exceedingly glad for Daniel and commanded that the men who had accused Daniel be thrown into the lion's den (Daniel 6:23-24). Those people thought they had set a trap for Daniel but they had set a trap for themselves. Daniel 6:10 (KJV) - "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his

chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God."

The Bible says in Proverbs 26:27 (KJ21), “Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.” The Holy Word of God also says in Psalm 7:15-16 (KJ21) – “[15] He made a pit and dug it, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. 1[6] His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall come down upon his own pate.”

When you think you have done something bad to someone, you have done it to yourself. The reverse is also true. When you have done something good to someone, you have done it to yourself. A story is told (I don’t know how accurate it is) of a lady who did not like a certain preacher because that preacher used to preach things that she did not like.

The lady plotted to kill the preacher; therefore, she made some chapatti for him to eat and kept poison in them. While the preacher was walking, he saw a hungry boy on the way and gave him the food that the lady had given him. Being so hungry, the boy ate it and died. The lady reached out to the preacher and told him of her ordeal. The preacher told her that he gave the boy the food that she had given him. Upon hearing this, the lady was sad and confessed that she had put poison in the food. The preacher told her, if you do something good it is for your own benefit and if you do something bad it is for your own detriment.

It is possible to bless and curse yourself by the actions you do. After the men were cast into the lion’s den, the king made a new decree for the true God, the God of Daniel, to be worshipped (Daniel 6:26-27). Daniel prospered during the reign of King Darius and during the reign of Cyrus the Persian (Daniel 6:28).

Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

Daniel 7:2 (KJV) - "I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."

This is the vision that Daniel saw:

Daniel 7:3-7 (KJV) – “[3] And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. [4] The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and

it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. [5] And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. [6] After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. [7] After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. [8] I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. [9] I beheld until the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow and the hair of His head like the pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. [10] A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The judgment was set, and the books were opened. [11] I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I beheld even till the beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. [12] As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. [13] I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. [14] And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Daniel was troubled by this vision. Therefore, he sought the interpretation from God. This was the interpretation he got:

Daniel 7:17-28 (KJ21) – "[17] 'These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. [18] But the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, even for ever and ever.' [19] Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass, which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet, [20] and of the ten horns that

were on his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell, even of that horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. [21] I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them, [22] until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the Kingdom. [23] "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces. [24] And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. [25] And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. [26] But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end. [27] And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' [28] Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart."

The Symbols mentioned

The Four Beasts: Represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth. Those kingdoms are the same as the kingdoms that the statue represents. They are: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greek and Roman kingdoms.

The Saints' Victory: Despite the rise of these kingdoms, the "saints of the Most High" will ultimately inherit and possess an everlasting kingdom.

The Fourth Beast: Daniel is particularly interested in the fourth beast, which is more terrifying and powerful than the others, with iron teeth and bronze nails. This beast crushes and devours its victims and has ten horns. The fourth beast symbolizes a fourth kingdom on earth, distinct from the others. It will dominate, crush, and break all other kingdoms.

The fourth beast is identified as the Roman Empire, which followed the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires. The characteristics of the beast—terrifying, dreadful, exceedingly strong with

iron teeth and bronze nails—reflect the Roman Empire's extensive power, military strength, and ability to crush its enemies.

It is known for its unmatched power and extensive conquests. Prophetic interpretations often see this beast as a symbol of a future, final world empire that will arise before the end times. It will be characterized by great tyranny and opposition to God and His people.

The Ten Kings: The ten horns represent ten kings arising from this kingdom. A subsequent king, different from the first ten, will subdue three kings and will speak against the Most High, oppress the saints, and try to change sacred times and laws.

The ten horns represent the division of the Roman Empire into ten smaller kingdoms or nations. These are the barbarian tribes that overran the Western Roman Empire, leading to its fragmentation. Some commonly identified tribes include the Visigoths, Vandals, Suebi, Alemanni, Anglo-Saxons, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Heruli, Burgundians, and Franks. The barbarian groups contributed to the fall of the Western Roman Empire and subsequently formed the foundations of various European nations.

The Barbarian groups

Visigoths:

- **Modern Countries:** Spain and Portugal
- **Notes:** The Visigothic Kingdom established control over much of the Iberian Peninsula.

Vandals:

- **Modern Country:** Parts of Tunisia and Algeria (in North Africa) and earlier movements through Spain
- **Notes:** The Vandals settled in North Africa, creating a kingdom centered around Carthage.

Suebi (Suevi):

- **Modern Countries:** Portugal and Galicia in Spain
- **Notes:** The Suebi established a kingdom in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.

Alemanni:

- **Modern Countries:** Germany (specifically southwestern Germany) and Switzerland
- **Notes:** The Alemanni were eventually incorporated into the Frankish Empire.

Anglo-Saxons:

- Modern Country: England
- **Notes:** The Anglo-Saxons formed several kingdoms that united into England.

Ostrogoths:

- Modern Country: Italy
- **Notes:** The Ostrogothic Kingdom was centered in Italy until its conquest by the Byzantines.

Lombards:

- Modern Country: Italy
- **Notes:** The Lombards established a kingdom in Italy, which was later conquered by the Franks.

Heruli:

- **Modern Country:** Parts of Italy and regions within the Byzantine Empire
- **Notes:** The Heruli were eventually absorbed by other groups like the Ostrogoths.

Burgundians:

- **Modern Countries:** France (Burgundy region) and Switzerland
- **Notes:** The Kingdom of Burgundy was integrated into the Frankish Empire.

Franks:

- **Modern Countries:** France and western Germany
- **Notes:** The Franks established a powerful kingdom that became the Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne.

A smaller horn emerges among the ten, displacing three of the original horns. This horn, with eyes like a human and a mouth speaking arrogantly, symbolizes a ruler who will rise to power, speak

against the Most High, and oppress the saints. It prevails until the "Ancient of Days" (a title for God) arrives. Judgment is rendered in favor of the saints, and they receive the kingdom.

This oppressive ruler's power will last for a set period, after which divine judgment will strip him of his dominion. The kingdom will be handed over to the saints of the Most High, establishing an everlasting dominion where all rulers will serve and obey God.

Although the vision and its interpretation trouble Daniel, he keeps the matter to himself.

Daniel received visions from God, including the interpretation of the dream about four beasts representing future kingdoms.

Daniel's Intercession for Israel

Daniel 9:3-19 (KJ21) - "[3] And I set my face unto the Lord God, seeking by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. [4] And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession and said, “O Lord, the great and fearsome God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His commandments, [5] we have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. [6] Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. [7] O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day: to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel who are near and who are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee. [8] O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. [9] To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him; [10] neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. [11] “Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him. [12] And He hath confirmed His words which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil; for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. [13] “As it is written

in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us. Yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Thy truth." [14] Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth, for we obeyed not His voice. [15] "And now, O Lord our God, who hast brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast made Thee a name, as at this day — we have sinned, we have done wickedly. [16] O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain; because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all who are about us. [17] "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. [18] O my God, incline Thine ear and hear. Open Thine eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee because of our righteousnesses, but because of Thy great mercies. [19] O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do! Defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."

Daniel prayed a heartfelt prayer of confession and intercession for the sins of Israel. In his prayer, he starts by acknowledging that righteousness belongs to God (Daniel 9:7). He says what belongs to us is confusion of faces (Daniel 9:7). The confusion we have is brought about by sin because God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) and the Spirit of God is a spirit of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

Despite being righteous and committed to God, he intercedes for the Israelites and says, "We have sinned (Daniel 9:5). When you are interceding for confession of sins for your friends, family members or whoever else you are interceding for, make yourself part of their sins in prayer. Instead of saying, "they have sinned," say, "we have sinned."

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Daniel's Prayer for Understanding

Daniel 9:4 (KJV) - "I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments."

Daniel prayed for understanding and wisdom in interpreting the vision he received from God. Whatever you do not know and understand and you would like to know and understand, ask God because He is truth. Secondly, God wants you to gain more knowledge and understanding. When

you ask God, He will reveal to you great mysteries which you never knew (Jeremiah 33:3). God does not want His children to be ignorant. He wants His chosen ones to be well educated and well exposed. He wants you to teach others and you cannot teach what you don't know and don't understand.

Daniel 10:16 (KJV) - "And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength."

Daniel received visits from angels, providing him with understanding and insight into future events. They also enabled him to understand the visions given to him by God.

God will use various ways to make you understand. Most of the time, He will lead you to read a Bible verse which will help you understand better. Other times, He may lead you to ask a friend. Sometimes He may give you a vision or a dream and the interpretation to help you understand. Sometimes He may lead you through a certain experience in your life. Whatever method He uses is always in accordance with His Word. God wants you to know. God wants you to understand. Therefore, ask Him.

Daniel did various faithful actions. He denied the king's diet for he was committed to God's diet. He interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the writing on the wall that had appeared to Belshazzar. Daniel also interceded for Israel. God worked mightily through him and tremendously rewarded him. He enabled him to have favor with the master of the eunuchs.

God made Daniel and his friends get promoted by King Nebuchadnezzar. God made Daniel to be promoted by Belshazzar as well. God gave Daniel a wonderful privilege of giving him visions concerning the future. For example, the vision of the four beasts and the seventy week prophecy. God desires to do more through us than he did to Daniel if we have faith in Him and obey Him.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for the lessons that I have learnt from Daniel. Help me to always have faith in You. Help me to be pure and holy, not to defile myself by the sinful pleasures of this world.

Show me how to use my gift for Your glory. Help me to be righteous and excellent in everything that I do. Show me great and mighty things which I do not know as You have promised in Your Word. Take away all the obstacles that are blocking me from serving You. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. What are some of the threats you are facing for being a Christian? Write them down and ask God to help you to overcome them.
2. Prayerfully find out how you can help your friends as Daniel helped his friends.
3. Ask God daily to reveal new things to you. To increase your knowledge, understanding and wisdom.
4. Ask God daily to give you an excellent spirit.
5. Write down the things that are blocking you from serving God and ask God to help you to overcome them.

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CHAPTER 71

THE FAITH OF PROPHET HOSEA

The children of Israel departed from the only Lord,

Hosea's marriage shared in the affliction of God,

It was a great burden, but he did what God said,

A decision that honored God and was faith-based.

God's warning always aims for restoration,

God seeks no destruction, He seeks transformation,

God fortifies, God always offers protection,

God provides, He does not delight in His children's starvation,

Let us return to God, for He hath torn and He will heal us,

He hath smitten and He will bind us up,

Let us be with God, and He will be with us,

He will never let us down; He will always take us up.

God seeks not to execute the fierceness of His anger,

God esteems mercy more than sacrifice,

God is not man, He is the only Holy One,

God alone should be worshiped for He is the Only One.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - ”[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Background and History of Prophet Hosea

Hosea prophesied during the reigns of four kings of Judah, namely: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and during the reign of Jeroboam II, monarch of Israel. His ministry occurred in the 8th century BCE, a period marked by political instability and moral decline in the northern kingdom of Israel.

Hosea’s primary focus was on the northern kingdom of Israel, though his messages also include references to Judah. Hosea delivered his prophecies during a time when Israel was experiencing economic prosperity but spiritual and moral decay.

Hosea’s message often revolves around the theme of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God, likening it to marital infidelity. He used his own troubled marriage as a metaphor for Israel’s relationship with God.

Despite the judgment prophesied for Israel’s sin, Hosea also offered hope and promised eventual restoration and healing. Hosea's call was to urge Israel to return to God and to repent of their idolatry and immorality.

In Hebrew, Hosea (הוֹשֵׁעַ, Hoshéa) means “salvation” or “deliverance.” It is derived from the Hebrew root word yasha (יָשַׁע،) which means “to save” or “to deliver.”

Despite the challenges and the unfaithfulness of the people, Hosea maintained his faith in God’s promises of eventual restoration. Hosea exemplified faith by continuing to deliver God’s messages despite personal hardship and the unresponsive nature of his audience. Hosea’s prophetic work was aimed at calling a nation to repentance and aligning with God’s promises.

Faithful Obedience to God's Call

Hosea 1:2 (KJ21) - “The beginning of the Word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.”

God called different prophets in different ways. Hosea’s call was one of the toughest, if not the toughest. At the beginning of his call, God commanded Hosea to marry a sex worker. Grace Unveiled YouTube channel in their video, “Why Would God tell a Prophet to Marry a Prostitute” Comments about this and says that people did not expect Hosea to marry such a person.

The video goes on to say how Hosea was a prophet called to lead a life of purity and devotion by God, but the same God tells him to marry someone who is the opposite of him. It also says, “This would be a scandal in his community. To anyone observing, it would look like Hosea was making a reckless even foolish decision, but Hosea obeys.”

God wanted him to experience the pain that God was going through when His people were committing spiritual prostitution. We often find it difficult to empathize with others because we are not in the same situation as they are, nor have we ever tasted the same fate as them.

God probably wanted Hosea to face a similar situation that He faced so that the prophet could be serious with proclaiming the Lord’s message. Normally, the best preachers in this world are the ones who have gone through some of the worst circumstances. However, the situation that God placed Hosea in was of a much lesser degree than that which over a billion sinners in the world put God in. Many men would not mind having sex with a sex worker, but they cannot take her home to be their spouse.

When choosing a spouse, a man understands that the wife he has chosen is going to be his life partner. So, he does his best to choose the best lady that he has ever seen who is willing and ready to accept him. Some men go deep in prayer and fasting to find a wife. The Bible says that he who finds a wife has found a good thing (Proverbs 18:22). Many men will agree that it is not easy to find a wife who is the exact type for which they are hoping.

One of the curses of disobedience is, “Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her (Deuteronomy 28:30, KJ21).” Hosea was to marry a wife who was not only going to sleep with another man, but with other men. He was to receive hate from the person whom he loved the most. Serving God requires us to do everything that He tells us to, even the hardest of things.

Hosea 1:3-5 (KJ21) - “[3] So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who conceived and bore him a son. [4] And the Lord said unto him, “Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. [5] And it shall come to pass at that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.””

The name "Gomer" is believed to mean "completion" or "to complete." It can signify something that is full or complete. In the context of Hosea's story, some scholars interpret this name symbolically, as it might represent the full measure of Israel's sins.

The name "Diblaim" is derived from the Hebrew word dibel or dibláh, which means "two cakes" or "two fig cakes." Fig cakes were a common food in ancient Israel, often made by compressing dried figs into a cake form. The name might also suggest something "sweet" or "pleasant," but in the context of Gomer’s background, it could carry a sense of irony, contrasting with her lifestyle. It might also be used to symbolize how sin feels pleasurable or sweet.

When Hosea heard God’s commandment to marry a prostitute, Hosea did not hesitate. He went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim who conceived and bore him a son. God commanded Hosea to call the son Jezreel because he was to avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu.

The name Jezreel (Hebrew: יִזְרְעֶאל) means "God sows" or "God will scatter." The name is derived from the Hebrew roots *"yizrâ"* (יִזְרָה) meaning "to sow" or "to scatter," and *"El"* (אֵל) which is a reference to God. Jehu (יֵהוּא) means "Yahweh is He" or "Yahweh is God." The name is composed of two parts: "Ye" (י) which is a shortened form of Yahweh (יהוה) the personal name of God in Hebrew, and "hu" (הוּא) which means "he" or "is".

Prophet Elisha anointed Jehu as the monarch of Israel, on God's command, with the primary mission to destroy the house of Ahab, which had led Israel into idolatry under the influence of Queen Jezebel (2 Kings 9-10). Jehu carried out this mission with zeal. He killed King Joram of

Israel, King Ahaziah of Judah, Queen Jezebel, and all the descendants of Ahab. He also destroyed the worshipers of Baal in Israel.

Despite his initial obedience to God's command to purge the house of Ahab and eliminate Baal worship, Jehu did not fully turn Israel back to the worship of Yahweh. He continued to allow the worship of the golden calves set up by Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom.

Hosea's prophecy indicates that although Jehu executed God's judgment on the house of Ahab, his descendants would face divine retribution for the bloodshed at Jezreel, particularly because Jehu's actions were carried out with excessive violence and because he did not lead Israel back to full obedience to God.

The naming of Hosea's son was significant in fulfilling God's prophecy for Israel. Following God's leading in the choice of his wife and the naming of his son was a total sacrifice. God requires us all to live that way. However, we choose our own ways which always lead to death and destruction. If Hosea would have chosen to follow his own way, God would not have forced him. God would have chosen another obedient person who would be a blessing and whom he would bless in return. Everything we do, no matter how small, should be directed by God.

Proclaiming God's Judgment and Restoration

Hosea 2:14-15 (KJ21) - "[14] Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. [15] And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."

"The apostasy of Israel had developed gradually. From generation to generation, Satan had made repeated attempts to cause the chosen nation to forget "the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments" that they had promised to keep forever. Deuteronomy 6:1. He knew that if he could only lead Israel to forget God, and to "walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them," they would "surely perish." Deuteronomy 8:19." - Prophets and Kings, Page 296.2, Ellen G. White.

"Had Israel heeded the messages of the prophets, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they had persisted in turning aside from His law that God was compelled

to let them go into captivity. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” was His message to them through Hosea. “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee: ... seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God.” Hosea 4:6.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 297.1, Ellen G. White.

Hosea 2 is a continuation of the metaphorical language where God, through Hosea, describes Israel as an unfaithful wife. The chapter begins with a description of Israel's infidelity and the resulting consequences, including God's judgment. However, the tone shifts from one of condemnation to one of reconciliation and hope.

Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God declares His intention to woo her back, symbolized by the act of “alluring” her. The “wilderness” represents a place of isolation and dependence, reminiscent of Israel’s time in the desert after the Exodus. It is a place where God can speak to Israel’s heart, offering comfort and renewal.

Hosea 2:14 reflects God's desire to restore a broken relationship, not through force, but through love and tenderness. God does not use force even though sometimes he punishes. His greatest weapon of influence and leadership is love.

Leaders should govern with love. When one uses force, they may think that they are making changes since most people will be compelled to do what they commanded out of fear. That is not leadership. That is tyranny and despotism. Such governing tactics cannot lead to long term success because people will be doing things out of force and not out of their own will. Such rulership dies once the ruler, or the system of governance, is dead. True leadership should have long-term and everlasting effects.

The people being led should continue with the practices that they were influenced by even after the leader and the system is gone. In fact, they should do more than what they were taught or inspired to do. When Jesus went back to heaven, His disciples did not stop spreading the gospel. They continued spreading the gospel, doing more than what they did when they were with Christ. The gospel reached more people after Jesus ascended to heaven than when He was on earth. That was Christ’s desire and that should be the goal of every leader. A leader should create a system that functions seamlessly when they are absent.

God promises to restore Israel's blessings, symbolized by the vineyards. The “Valley of Achor” (which means “Valley of Trouble”) is transformed into a “door of hope.” The Valley of Achor was initially a place of judgment during Joshua's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 7:24-26), but here it symbolizes a turning point where trouble is replaced with hope and renewal. The reference to Israel singing "as in the days of her youth" recalls the joy and celebration of the Exodus when God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. This verse signifies a renewal of joy and a return to the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

These verses illustrate God’s unwavering love and grace toward His people, even in the face of their unfaithfulness. While Israel faces judgment for her sins, God’s ultimate plan is one of redemption and restoration. The metaphor of God as a loving husband who seeks to win back His unfaithful wife underscores the depth of God's commitment to His covenant with Israel.

Pain and Restoration

Hosea 2:23 (KJ21) - “And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.”

In Hosea 2:1-13, God, through Hosea, condemns Israel's unfaithfulness. He talks of the punishments He is going to give them. God threatens to expose Israel's shame by stripping her of all the blessings and prosperity He had given her, leaving her vulnerable and desolate, like a barren wilderness (Hosea 2:3). God declares that He will not show mercy to Israel's offspring, symbolizing the people of Israel, because they are the result of spiritual adultery—following other gods instead of remaining faithful to Him (Hosea 2:4).

God says He will block Israel’s path with thorns and walls, preventing her from pursuing her idolatrous lovers (false gods). This represents the obstacles and difficulties Israel will face because of being unfaithful (Hosea 2:6). God warns that He will take back the blessings He had bestowed on Israel, such as the grain, wine, wool, and flax, which were gifts that Israel had misused to honor other gods. This signifies the loss of material blessings and security (Hosea 2:9).

God threatens to expose Israel's sins publicly, revealing her shame before the very idols and nations she pursued. This indicates the humiliation and disgrace Israel will face because of her actions (Hosea 2:10). God declares that He will end all Israel's celebrations and religious observances, including feasts and sabbaths, which had become empty rituals due to their idolatry. This reflects the end of joy and the blessings that come with these celebrations (Hosea 2:11).

God warned that He would destroy Israel's vineyards and fig trees, which she credited to her false gods. This punishment symbolizes the removal of prosperity and the reversal of blessings, leaving the land desolate (Hosea 2:12). God declares that He will punish Israel for her idolatry, specifically for worshiping the Baals and adorning herself to pursue false gods. This reflects the direct consequences of forgetting God and turning to idols (Hosea 2:13).

God used the Prophet Hosea to give them that message so that they could change their ways and turn to Him. God warns people out of love. He expects them to heed His warning so that they can change their ways and repent. Unfortunately, we never listen to God. He has told us that there will be a hell fire for unrepentant sinners. Despite that warning, we still cling to sin like a thief gripping stolen goods, fearing the loss of what was never rightfully his.

In Hosea 2:14-23, God talks about the restoration He was going to give Israel after He punishes them. Evil people in the world often torture people so that they can feel pain whether emotionally, psychologically, or physically. Their aim is for you to feel excruciating pain and probably die from that pain. God is holy, He is not evil. When God punishes someone, His ambition is not pain. His ambition is for you to find pleasure through that pain or at the end of that pain. His punishments aim to bless and not to curse, to lift and not to bring down.

After God gave a warning of punishment to the Israelites, He gave a bountiful message of restoration. God is not quick to anger, and He does not stay angry for long. He is quick to forgive, to restore and to bless. He said that He will show the Israelites into Him on earth, and He will have mercy upon those that have not obtained mercy. God also said that they will be His people, and He will be their God. What a wonderful God.

Hosea 14:4 (KJ21) - "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him."

Witnessing to God’s Transformative Power

Hosea 3:5 (KJ21) - “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.”

Before their exile, the Israelites had fallen into idolatry and unfaithfulness to God. They worshiped other gods and neglected the covenant relationship with Yahweh, leading to their downfall. The prophets, including Hosea, repeatedly warned them of the consequences of their actions, but they failed to heed these warnings. The exile was a direct consequence of their sins. It served as a period of purification and reflection, during which the people realized the gravity of their unfaithfulness. The loss of their land, temple, and identity as a nation was a severe judgment, but it paved the way for a return to God.

The immediate historical context of Hosea's prophecy relates to the northern kingdom of Israel (often referred to as Ephraim), which the Assyrian Empire conquered in 722 B.C. The Assyrians took the Israelite people into exile and destroyed the kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom of Judah later faced a similar fate when the Babylonians overran it leading to the Babylonian Exile around 586 B.C.

After approximately 70 years of exile in Babylon, a remnant of the Jewish people, primarily from the tribe of Judah, returned to their homeland. This return was facilitated by the decree of Cyrus the Great, the Persian king who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. The returnees began to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, seeking to restore their worship and covenant relationship with God. Hosea's prophecy also points to a deeper spiritual return, where the people of Israel would seek the Lord with renewed devotion. The reference to "David their king" is often interpreted as a messianic prophecy, pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ, who is seen as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant—a king from David's lineage who would reign forever.

In the New Testament, Jesus is recognized as the descendant of David who fulfills the role of the eternal king. His ministry, death, and resurrection opened the way for a new covenant, calling both Jews and Gentiles to return to God. This spiritual return is seen in the early Christian movement, where many Jews embraced Jesus as the Messiah, and later, in the spread of Christianity among the nations.

The power of God is transformative. It not only makes small changes to someone, but it also transforms the whole being. It purifies the hardest of stains. Hosea witnessed to this transformative power by delivering that message. Hosea's work was not to transform; Hosea's work was to tell them that God can transform. Whether they believed it or not, he had to proclaim it. Do not fail to proclaim God's Word because you worry about people believing it. Do whatever God tells you to do and leave the rest of the work for Him.

Calling for Genuine Repentance

Hosea 6:1 (KJ21) - “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.”

Repentance is a very uncommon message to be preached in churches today. We only want to focus on the good side. The gospel in its entirety is good but we are living in sin and our sins anger God. God is harsh towards sin but loving to us. So, God calls us to repent our sins. However, some people do not like being told about the sins that they have committed. Therefore, they do everything possible to block that message not knowing that by doing so, they are willingly diving into the fires of hell. A call for genuine repentance needs to be made by whoever is preaching the gospel. Repentance leads to salvation which leads to eternal life and many other good things. We have no reason to avoid it.

Emphasizing God’s Steadfast Love and Mercy

Hosea 6:6 (KJ21) - “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

God esteems mercy more than sacrifice. He desires you to know Him more than the burning of offerings. Some people contribute huge amounts of money to church but they do not find time to cultivate a relationship with God.

They return their tithes faithfully, sometimes even more than the ten percent that is commanded. Some even attend church services so that they can give tithes and once they give, they leave. They

do not take time to know God. They do not study their Bibles. They are always busy looking for money. Some may have a genuine reason behind their business as they may be working hard to give money to church and to help the poor. Such causes are noble. However, the more knowledge you have of God, the more effective you will be in His ministry. People conducting church service are not as effective as they should be because they have little knowledge and understanding of God's Word and they are comfortable with the little knowledge that they have.

Few people serving in church, including pastors, study the Bible on their own. Many rely on what they have been taught by other people or Bible commentaries. We all have little knowledge and understanding of God's Word. This includes those who have made it a matter of life and death to study it (because truth is infinite as God is infinite). However, we should never get tired of seeking to know the truth. God rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Acknowledging God's Sovereignty Over All

Hosea 11:9 (KJ21) - "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."

God gives a reason He will not execute the fierceness of His anger. The reason He gives is that He is God, and not man. People are often quick to react to anger. Sometimes we react without knowing. We allow our temperaments to take control of us and we respond to them. God, who has His thoughts and His ways above ours, is in control of everything, including His feelings.

If God's feelings were in control of Him, we would all be dead and forgotten. We can make Him very angry and He may fail to react because He has our best interests at heart more than His. These are some of the things that make God sovereign. Sovereignty does not exist in ruling with an iron fist as many leaders falsely believe. They try to earn respect from people by wanting to show them who is the boss. That leadership style does not bring much success. God's leadership style brings tremendous success.

Imagine if God did not forgive Paul, would we be having all those books from the New Testament that Pail wrote in the exact same style that he wrote them? Imagine if God did not forgive Abraham,

David, and many others. God is sovereign because He is the Creator. The Sabbath day is special because it points us to God as the Creator and we acknowledge His sovereignty. By faith we should follow God's leadership style, which is the most sovereign. By faith, Hosea acknowledged this sovereignty.

Trust in God's Compassion and Forgiveness

Hosea 14:7 (KJ21) - “They that dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

When you return to God, He restores you and you are able to enjoy His boundless, never ending blessings. When the prodigal son left home, he thought he left with much but in reality, he had left with very little in comparison to all that his father owned. When we leave God after He has blessed us and choose to go and enjoy those blessings in riotous living, we are leaving with very little even though we think it's much.

It was when the prodigal son spent all that he had in profligate living that he realized what he had was very little. This is because it did not take long before all that he had diminished. When he returned to his father, his father received him when he was still far away. His father ran to him and welcomed him home. Therefore, he was able to enjoy all that his father owned, which was his by inheritance. When you return to God, He will revive you as the corn and make you grow as the vine. When you return to God, He restores all that you had lost in sin.

The faith of Prophet Hosea is a powerful testament to the enduring nature of God’s love and mercy. Hosea’s life and ministry highlight the importance of obedience to God’s call, even when it involves personal sacrifice and hardship. His unwavering commitment to proclaiming God’s message, despite the challenges he faced, serves as a profound example of faith in action. Through Hosea’s story, the Bible reminds us of the necessity of genuine repentance and the boundless grace of God, who is always ready to heal and restore those who return to Him.

Prayer

Dear God, I thank you for the blessings that you have given me in my life. Please forgive me for being unfaithful and not hearkening to your voice. Help me to obey every Word that comes from you. Please restore all that I lost through sin and shower me with your love. Transform me completely so that I will be perfect as you are perfect. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. What stands out to you most in Hosea's life?
2. Reflect on the sacrifices you are willing to make for God. How far can you go?
3. What is one difficult thing that God is telling you to do that you are not doing? Ask Him to help you do it.
4. What bad character trait do you want God to eliminate from your life? Ask Him to help you cut it off and transform you.

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CHAPTER 72

THE FAITH OF PROPHET JOEL

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God restores what cannot be restored,

So why are you reluctant to follow His Word?

The name Joel means Yahweh is God,

When you go to God, you must believe that He is.

Alas, for the day of the Lord is at hand,

The Lord will do great things, fear not O land,

Take the chance now, take a righteous turn,

Like Joel, pour your spirit on me O Lord.

Sound the alarm in God's holy mountain, blow the trumpet in Zion,

Be bold for God, have the heart of a lion,

You are more than blessed, you are God's scion,

Enormous, stunning, and more significant than the Grand Canyon.

Turn to the Lord with all your heart,

Men, bow down in reverence without your hat,

Turn to the Lord with all your heart,

Turn to Him before the book of life is shut.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - ”[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Background and History of the Prophet Joel

The name "Joel" (יוֹאֵל) is of Hebrew origin. "Joel" means "Yahweh is God" or "Jehovah is God," reflecting the central message of his prophecy—that the Lord is the one true God who reigns over all. Joel is one of the twelve Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. Although the book bearing his name is relatively short, its messages are powerful and significant.

The exact period of Joel's ministry is debated among scholars, with estimates ranging from the 9th century B.C. to the post-exilic period around the 5th century B.C. Some place him during the reign of King Joash of Judah (835–796 B.C.), while others suggest a later date due to certain references in his prophecies. But there is no explicit historical marker within the text to confirm the precise period.

Joel's prophecies were directed primarily at the people of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. His messages focused on calling the nation to repent in the face of imminent disaster, which they describe as the "Day of the Lord."

The book of Joel opens with a vivid description of a devastating locust plague, which Joel interprets as a judgment from God due to the people's sins. The locusts are described in apocalyptic terms, foreshadowing a greater judgment if the people do not repent. Joel urges people to turn back to God with sincere repentance, fasting, and prayer. He emphasizes that God is merciful and willing to forgive if they return to Him with their whole hearts.

A central theme in Joel's prophecy is the "Day of the Lord," a time of divine judgment and salvation. Joel warns that this day is near and that it will bring both destruction for the unrepentant and

deliverance for those who turn to God. He also speaks of a future outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which Apostle Peter later references in Acts 2:16-21 as being fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Like the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, Joel's prophecies emphasize the sovereignty of God over all events, including natural disasters and national crises. His call to repentance is rooted in the belief that God is both just and merciful, and that He controls the destinies of nations.

Joel's warnings about the "Day of the Lord" align with the themes of deliverance and judgment. The locust plague in Joel's time is a reminder of God's power to bring judgment, while the promise of future restoration and the outpouring of the Spirit points to God's power to save and deliver.

The outpouring of the Spirit prophesied by Joel, which was fulfilled at Pentecost, signifies a new era of faith and spiritual renewal. This aligns with the faith of those in Hebrews 11:33 who "obtained promises" and saw God's power at work in miraculous ways.

Although Joel's prophecy focuses on national repentance, it also implies the perseverance of the faithful remnant. The call to fast, pray, and seek God's face requires faith that God will hear and respond.

God Restores What Cannot Be Restored

Joel 1:4 (KJ21) - “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.”

Joel 2:25 (KJ21) - “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm and the caterpillar and the palmer worm, My great army which I sent among you."

The children of Israel were facing one plague after another because of their disobedience to God. The palmerworms came and ate their produce and left some remaining. After they left, the locusts came and left some for the cankerworms. After the cankerworm left, the caterpillars came and cleared everything that was left.

God rarely brings His punishments all at once. He does this out of mercy. God desires you to learn a lesson and return to Him. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). But God does not kill us

immediately when we sin. Instead, He gives us small punishments or allows us to encounter small consequences so that we cannot return to those sins. There is a mountainous difference between restoration and repair. The work of salvation is a work of restoration, not repair. Instead of mending what is broken, God restores everything.

In Baptism, the entire body is immersed in water, not just a few parts. This is because God transforms and restores completely. When the palmerworms, the locusts, the cankerworms, and the caterpillars have eaten, what they have eaten goes to waste. Therefore, by human power it cannot be recovered.

God does what we are not able to do because He is God. I have heard people (particularly children) ask, how God will raise the dead people who have been burnt to ashes. We do not know in detail how He will do that; we just know that He will do that. God can do things and does things that are beyond our understanding. God restores what is lost and has no hope to be found. By faith, Joel did not question God's ability to restore what was completely lost. Instead, he delivered the message.

Joel 2:26-27 (KJ21) - "[26] And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. [27] And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed."

The Day of the Lord is at Hand

Joel 1:15 (KJ21) - "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Joel 2:1 (KJ21) - "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

We are often comfortable in sin because we think that it will take such a long time before Jesus comes back. It might take a long time before Jesus comes back but you don't know when your lifespan will come to an end. Your life might end the next second. Once your life is over, judgment for you is made for your case has already been decided.

Prophet Joel told the Israelites that the day of the Lord was at hand. He told them to blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in God's mountain. This is also a call to us. Jesus is coming soon. Therefore, let us blow the trumpet by boldly and loudly proclaiming God's message to the entire world. We should let the whole world know that Jesus is coming soon.

Philippians 2:12 (AMP) - "So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed [my instructions with enthusiasm], not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation [that is, cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity] with awe-inspired fear and trembling [using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ]."

The word "tremble" in Hebrew is רָגְזוּ (pronounced ragzu). The root of this word, רגז (ragaz), carries the meaning of trembling, shaking, or being agitated. Prophet Joel tells all the inhabitants of the land to tremble because the day of the Lord is at hand. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12 to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is a call for diligence in seeking God and acknowledging our dependence on His power. We cannot save ourselves, but we can seek God with all our hearts.

“You have the fear of God before you, and you will have a trembling lest you will depart from the counsels of God. There will be that trembling. You will be working out your own salvation all the time with fear and trembling. Does it rest here? No, let us hear how the divine power comes in: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (verse 13). Here are man's works, and here are God's works. They both cooperate. Man cannot accomplish this work without the help of the divine power.” - This Day With God, Page 344, Ellen G. White.

As you are working out your salvation with fear and trembling, you will be asking yourself how best you can apply God's commandments according to God's standards. How best can you apply the education you have gained in your lifetime? How best can you apply the true knowledge you have gained from reading books and from school? How best can you turn your foot away from the Sabbath? How best can you be a blessing to other people?

“Man's working, as brought out in the text, is not an independent work he performs without God. His whole dependence is upon the power and grace of the Divine Worker. Many miss the mark here, and claim that man must work his own individual self, free from divine power. This is not in

accordance with the text. Another argues that man is free from all obligation, because God does it all, both the willing and the doing. The text means that the salvation of the human soul requires the will power to be subjected to the divine will power.... And it is the very hardest, sternest conflict which comes with the purpose and hour of great resolve and decision of the human to incline the will and way to God's will and God's way." - Letter 135, 1898, Ellen G. White.

Calling for Repentance and Holistic Transformation

Joel 2:12-13 (KJ21) - "[12] Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: [13] And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil."

God calls His people to turn to Him with all their hearts. God wants us to love and trust Him with all our hearts. He loves us with all His heart. We are often selfish, especially when it comes to giving our whole heart to God. We want to give Him some of our heart and not the entire heart. God calls them to turn to Him with genuine fasting and mourning. Prayer and fasting that is effective is the one that is genuine

Physical actions that are meant to be spiritual do not do much good if they are not done out of an earnest loving heart. There is need for sincerity from the heart for God to accept our prayers as a sweet-smelling incense. Rending one's heart to God shows one's need for real transformation. God does not need your garments. He needs your heart.

The songs we sing in church during worship, are we singing them from the heart? We have sung some of them so many times that the words come from our lips easily like automation. But we have never paused to meditate on the words. We can recite John 3:16 and other popular verses without having to read them, but we have never paused to meditate on them. Therefore, when we recite them, they do not come from the heart.

Prophet Joel is calling for holistic transformation. He tells the people of Judah to turn to God. He gives them the assurance that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and has great kindness. When you go to God with an earnest heart, seeking forgiveness and transformation, He will not

turn you away. Instead, He will receive you with love. He will take off your old garments of sin and give you new garments of righteousness.

God is so loving that even when Adam and Eve ran away from Him after they had sinned, He still went after them. He took away the aprons of fig leaves that they had sewed on themselves. He clothed them with coats of skins which were better garments than the fig leaves they had sewed upon themselves.

Encouraging Prayer and Seeking God

Joel 2:17 (KJ21) - “Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

Prophet Joel encouraged people to pray and seek God. He emphasized for the spiritual leaders to weep to God for the people. A spiritual leader has immense authority. In those days, very few people had the privilege of becoming priests. The work of the priest was to serve the people, particularly on their spiritual needs. Joel calls upon them to intercede for the people. He tells them to cry out to God for the heathen not to rule over God's people.

1 Peter 2:9 (AMP) - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a [special] people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies [the wonderful deeds and virtues and perfections] of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The good news is that, through Jesus Christ, all those who believe in Him have been made kings and priests. We need no earthly priest to stand on our behalf, only the heavenly High Priest Jesus. We can take our petitions directly to God and He will listen to us. Let us use that opportunity to commune with God and to seek Him with all our hearts.

Proclaiming God's Promises

Joel 2:28-29 (KJ21) - "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit."

Some of us think that it is only the privilege of prophets to receive messages from God. We deceptively believe that pastors, bishops, reverends, church elders or theologians know and understand the Bible more than we do because of their titles. This is not true. God desires to speak to everyone. It is a solemn mistake we make in our churches when we only hand pick a few people to minister to us.

We have many good speakers among us, even among the young people, but we only choose those who we have heard speaking before and are sure that they can speak. I understand the need of wanting our programs to run smoothly and to stay away from embarrassment, but we have to take risks and give others an opportunity. They may not be good and eloquent speakers, but they will speak to a soul to whom no other person would have spoken. In the book of Joel, God promises to pour out His Spirit on everyone (all flesh).

The word flesh represents the carnality of human beings. Therefore, God promised to pour out His Spirit among everyone that is carnal. The Spirit of God will take out all the evil fleshly nature and work in a man both to will and to do of God's good pleasure.

Not only shall God instill righteousness in them but He shall elevate them by giving them the privilege to prophesy. He shall do that to everyone including the ones considered to be lowest in society such as servants and handmaids. That is why it is important to associate with everyone, discriminating no one because you do not know who God can choose to bless you.

God blessed Naaman, an army commander, through a young servant girl in his house who recommended him to Prophet Elisha. When we only give a selected few the opportunity to preach and teach in our churches, we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to lead. The same applies to our church choirs and singing groups. Some focus too much on the perfection of the sound that they forget the ministry part of it which should be the main focus.

Some music trainers in church are too harsh to their students that their conduct discourages people from joining the choir. Many choirs have placed strict rules on the wearing of uniforms, not regarding those members who cannot afford them. Some strict teachers have caused people to leave the church. Our churches have become less powerful because they have allowed structures to lead them instead of the Spirit of God.

Advocating for Divine Justice

Joel 3:12 (KJ21) - “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.”

God, the righteous judge will judge us according to our actions. God is very fair as He knows the motives behind all our words and actions. Earthly judges have a limited knowledge and understanding of the people that they are judging. Their judgment is based on evidence. Someone might have committed a crime but there is no sufficient evidence or there is no evidence at all. Therefore, that person will go scott free.

God has all the evidence about you. He has witnessed you doing all the good and bad things in secret that no one knows about. The righteous judge will reward all the good actions that you have done, including the smallest ones. He is not quick to anger. He is not quick to punish. But when one rebelliously refuses to turn to Him and continues with their sinful ways, He will judge that person and punish them. Through Faith, Prophet Joel emphasized on God's divine justice.

Joel’s message is a clarion call for us to tremble at the coming Day of the Lord, to seek holistic transformation, and to trust in God's divine justice. Joel's prophecy reminds us that faith is not just about believing in God's promises but also about responding to His call with sincere repentance and wholehearted devotion. Just as Joel proclaimed the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh, so too are we invited to participate in this divine promise, living lives marked by faith, prayer, and the pursuit of righteousness. The faith of Joel is a beacon, guiding us to trust in the God who restores, redeems, and reigns forever.

Prayer

O Lord God of restoration, we come to You with hearts open, seeking Your power to renew and redeem. You alone can restore what seems beyond hope, and we marvel at Your ability to make whole what is shattered. Grant us, like Joel, a faith that does not question but trusts in Your sovereignty over all things.

Almighty God, we sound the alarm and humbly call upon Your Spirit to fill our lives. Help us turn to You with all our hearts, rending our hearts and not just our garments. Lead us to repentance and grant us the courage to walk boldly in Your truth.

In Your grace, pour out Your Spirit upon us, O Lord. May we prophesy, dream dreams, and see visions that draw us closer to You. Strengthen us to proclaim Your message with boldness, so that the world may see Your light and turn to You before the Day of the Lord arrives.

Teach us to walk in reverent fear, working out our salvation with awe-inspired diligence. Make us instruments of Your mercy and ambassadors of Your Word, filled with love, joy, and unwavering faith. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Activity

Step 1: Reflect

Read Joel 2:12-13.

Take a few minutes to write down areas in your life that need God’s guidance, mercy, or restoration.

Step 2: Repent

As you reflect on these areas, take time to sincerely repent. Express in prayer or writing anything you feel may hinder a closer relationship with God.

Step 3: Restore

Pray for God’s restoration in these areas, asking for faith to see Him work even before change appears.

Visualize and note the joy, peace, or renewed hope that can come from God's promised restoration.

Closing Reflection: Revisit Joel's message and thank God for His faithfulness. Stay open to seeing how God may answer your prayers for restoration in surprising or gentle ways.

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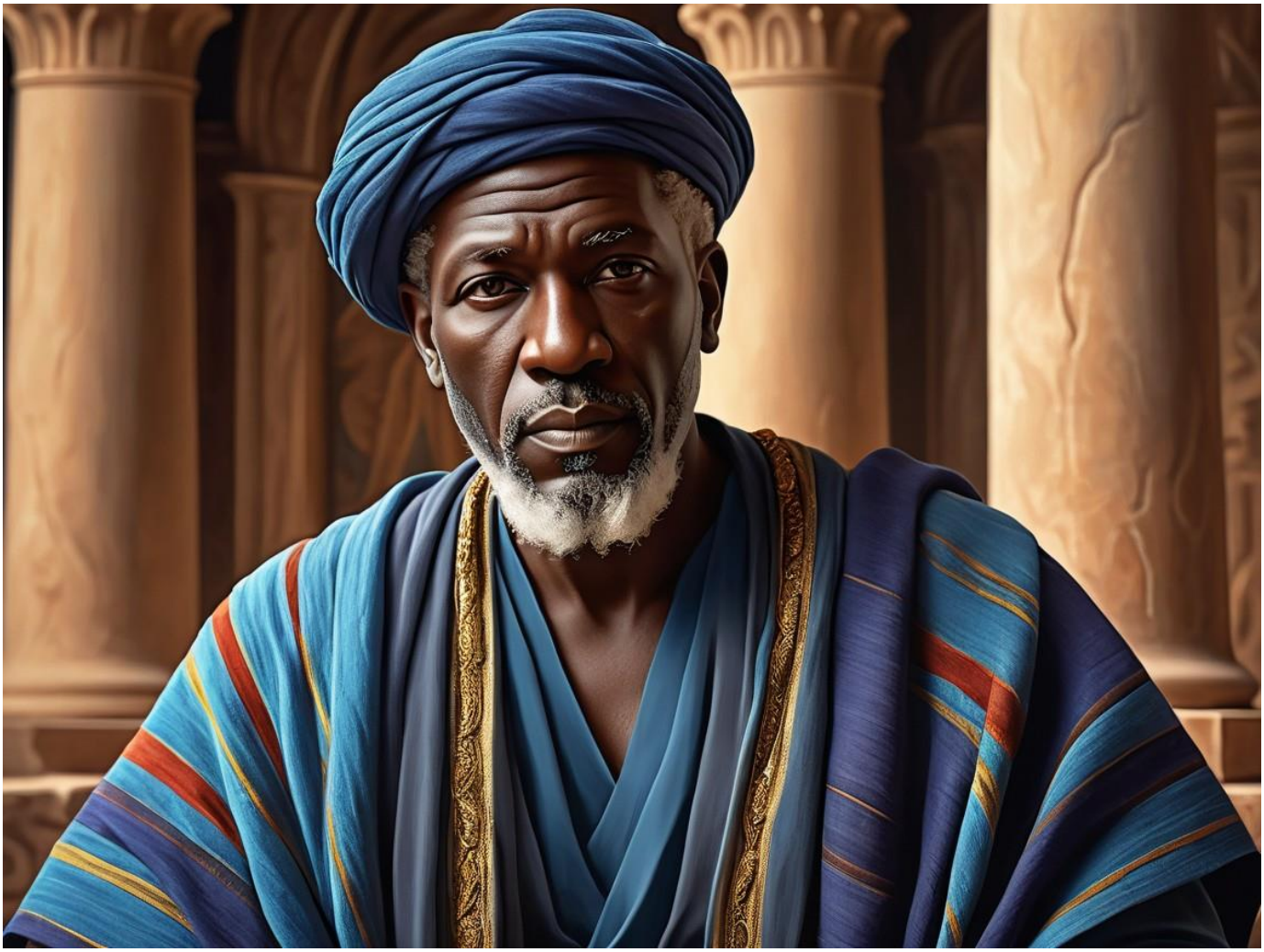
CHAPTER 73

THE FAITH OF PROPHET AMOS



A prophet's voice beneath common skies,

Sent by God, the Lord who dwells on high,

From Tekoa's fields, a shepherd's rise,

Amos proclaimed truth; the prophet preached no lie.

The lion hath warned, who will not fear,

He spoke God's Word, sharp, loud, and clear,

"Prepare to meet thy God," Amos warned,

God's message aimed to make them free from their evil bond.

Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live,

Seek God's Word, free for you to receive,

When you receive, like Amos, don't shy to give,

For the Bible says, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Not born of courts, nor prophet's kin,

Yet truth in him burned fierce within,

Truth makes you better, truth makes you win,

Truth makes you free, free from every sin.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - ”[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Background and History of the Prophet Amos

Amos was one of the earliest prophets whose writings are preserved in the Old Testament, and he was active during a time of relative peace and prosperity in Israel, around the 8th century B.C. The name "Amos" (עָמוֹס, *Amos*) is of Hebrew origin. "Amos" means "burden" or "burden-bearer." This name is fitting given the heavy and challenging message that Amos was tasked with delivering to the people of Israel.

Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (around 760–750 B.C.). This period was characterized by economic prosperity, but also by social inequality, moral decay, and religious hypocrisy.

Although Amos was from Tekoa, a small town in Judah, his prophecies were primarily directed at the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Tekoa was about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Amos was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore figs, indicating his humble, rural background.

Amos was called by God to deliver a message of judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He condemned social injustices, including the exploitation of the poor and the perversion of justice by the rich and powerful. Amos also criticized the hollow religious practices of the people, who outwardly worshiped God while inwardly living in sin and oppression. His message was a stern warning of impending divine judgment if the people did not repent.

Key Themes in Amos's Prophecies

Social Justice: Amos is best known for his emphasis on social justice. He denounced the oppression of the poor, the corruption of the judicial system, and the self-indulgence of the wealthy. His call for justice is epitomized in the famous verse, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

Divine Judgment: Amos warned that God's judgment would come upon Israel because of their sins. This judgment would be severe, resulting in the destruction of Israel and the exile of its people. Amos's prophecies came true when the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 B.C.

True Worship: Amos emphasized that God desires genuine worship from a pure heart, than mere ritualistic practices. He condemned the religious ceremonies of the Israelites as meaningless because they were not accompanied by righteous living.

The Day of the Lord: Amos introduced the concept of the "Day of the Lord" as a time of judgment, not just for Israel's enemies but for Israel itself. This was a reversal of the popular belief that the Day of the Lord would bring victory and blessing to Israel.

Hope and Restoration: Although much of Amos's message was focused on judgment, the book ends with a promise of future restoration. God would one day restore the house of David and bring blessings to the remnant of Israel.

The passage in Hebrews 11:32-35 highlights the faith and perseverance of various figures from the Old Testament, including prophets who endured suffering and opposition for their obedience to God.

Amos, like the prophets mentioned in Hebrews 11, displayed remarkable faith in proclaiming God's message of judgment, even though it was likely to provoke hostility. He spoke out against powerful elites and the status quo, knowing that his message would be unpopular and could endanger his life.

Amos persevered in his mission despite the challenges and opposition he faced. His courage to stand up for truth and justice, regardless of the consequences, reflects faith. The prophets endured suffering because they trusted in God's righteousness and justice.

Like many of the prophets in the Bible, Amos called the people back to righteousness. His emphasis on justice and true worship aligns with the broader biblical theme of living a life of faith that manifests in action, particularly in caring for the marginalized and oppressed. The prophets often warned of God's judgment because of sin, but they also held onto the hope of God's mercy and the ultimate fulfillment of His promises.

Obeyed God's Call Despite His Background

Amos 7:14-15 (KJ21) - "[14] Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah: 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. [15] And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, "Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."'"

Amos was not originally a prophet by profession nor was he a prophet's son. He had no experience in prophesying, and he had no experience of seeing someone close to him prophesying. Many people expect you to be like your parents. They expect you to take the same career path that your parents have taken. I have heard musicians and other celebrities being asked in interviews if their children are taking the same careers as them. Your father and your mother do not have to be something for you to be something.

Amos was a herder and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He did not refuse God's calling when God called him to be a prophet because of his lack of experience. God called him when he was taking care of the flock. All work that is moral is profitable. Myron Golden says, "all work works."

It is a beautiful thing to engage in any type of moral work when you have not yet known the work that God has called you to do. This will prevent you from being idle and being used by Satan to do his work. God's purpose for Amos was to be a prophet and not a herdsman. However, his herdsman work prevented him from being idle and God called him while he was in the field following the flock.

Samuel did not anoint David as king when he was sitting in the house doing nothing. David was in the field shepherding the flock when Samuel called for him to anoint him. Before you know your purpose, don't be idle. Do something.

Like David, God saw Amos taking proper care of his flock and surely knew that Amos could take good care of His people. God loves it when you are doing something profitable. He does not like it when people are idle because Satan uses idle minds as his breeding grounds to work out evil.

Most of the success that Satan has gained upon good intentioned Christians is because of finding them with idle minds. Idle minds usually result either from not knowing one's purpose, knowing one's purpose but lacking direction, knowing one's purpose, and knowing the direction but failing to pursue it.

Amos obeyed God without hesitation. When God gives you an assignment to do, He is giving you a promotion. This is because God always aims to promote, never to demote. He may call you to do something that seems menial to you, and you may think that He is degrading you but indeed He is upgrading you.

God called Amos because He wanted to promote him from being a servant to a prophet who will proclaim God's message to people. He promoted Amos from spending time with animals to spending time with Him, from talking to animals to talking to Him.

James 1:17 (KJ21) - "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Accept the good things that God is giving you. Sometimes and often, God disguises His beautiful rewards that many end up not noticing them. One way He disguises them is by giving you an assignment that seems unpleasant or quite challenging to undertake.

A greater blessing is in those assignments that are unpleasant and/or challenging than those which are not. Amos took the challenging assignment of prophesying. By faith, he blessed people and got blessed through the blessings he imparted to them.

Boldly Spoke Against Injustice and Oppression

Amos 5:14-15 (KJ21) - “[14] Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. [15] Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.”

Amos demonstrated his faith by speaking out boldly against the social injustices, oppression, and corruption that were rampant in Israel. He called out leaders and the wealthy for their mistreatment of the poor, showing his commitment to God's justice.

God through His servant Amos tells people to seek good and not evil. Some people work so hard to exhaust all the evil options. They are always trying to find the next evil thing to do. We should switch our focus from seeking evil to seeking good. We should have the same determination we have in doing evil to do good. Robbers may be roaming around looking for a new opportunity to steal. God is telling such people to hate evil and love good.

The sinful nature that we have naturally loves evil. It takes the power of God to change that sinful nature to a righteous nature. When we allow God to change us, we will love righteousness, and we will be looking for opportunities to act in righteousness. When we stop evil and do good, God will be gracious to avert our judgment and through Him, we will inherit eternal life.

Amos 2:6-7 (KJ21) - "[6] Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; [7] they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane My holy name."

One who does evil to his neighbor, does it in exchange to gain what is very little. They might think they are gaining a lot, but they are not. Judas Iscariot sold Jesus for only thirty pieces of silver. Jesus was always a true friend to Judas. He wanted the best for His disciple who betrayed Him. He did the best to Judas and had the power to do even more. Judas exchanged the Savior for a little money.

In the beginning of His association with His disciples, Jesus made them catch so many fish that the boat almost sunk. They had previously tried to catch fish, but they were not able to on their own. When Jesus joined them, they caught so much. Let us reason together. If Jesus had the power to catch many fish, He had the power to give Judas more than thirty silver coins if he needed. Some people have gotten into illegal activities to gain money because they do not ask God.

God is saying that He will avenge Israel for their transgressions. He said that He will not turn away their punishment. This is because, they sold the righteous for silver (not even gold) and the poor

for a pair of shoes. In other words, they exchanged something big (human beings) for something so small (material goods).

Many of us, when we hear the story of Esau exchanging his birthright for a plate of food, we perceive him as intellectually disabled. We do not realize that we also engage in similar activities whenever we give in to fleshly lusts to gain short-term pleasure. We are exchanging what is of a higher value for what is of a lower value.

Profanity among the Israelites was so great that there was no dignity. It was common to see a father and a son committing adultery or fornication with the same lady. Pride was at its fullness. They discriminated against the poor and the meek. God had suffered their iniquity for too long. Their cup of iniquity was full. They were to either empty it through earnest repentance or they would encounter the indignation of the Lord.

Prophesied Fearlessly Even When Confronted

Amos 7:12-17 (AMP) - "[12] Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, run for your life [from Israel] to the land of Judah [your own country] and eat bread and live as a prophet there! [13] But do not prophesy any longer at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary and a royal residence.” [14] Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a prophet [by profession], nor am I a prophet’s son; I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. [15] But the Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’ [16] Now therefore, listen to the Word of the Lord: You say, ‘You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.’ [17] Therefore, thus says the Lord, ‘Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city [when the Assyrians capture Samaria] and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided by a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean and defiled [pagan] land, and Israel shall certainly go from its land into exile.’”

Amos did not back down even when faced with opposition. When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, tried to silence him and send him away, Amos continued to deliver God's message of judgment. This act showed his unwavering faith in God's command and his courage to speak the truth.

Amaziah was a priest at Bethel during the time of the prophet Amos. Bethel was an important religious center in the northern kingdom of Israel, and Amaziah held a significant position as a priest there. Unlike the prophets who received their calling directly from God, Amaziah was more aligned with the political and religious establishment of the kingdom. He served the interests of King Jeroboam II.

Amaziah perceived Amos's prophecies as a threat to the stability and sanctity of the king's sanctuary at Bethel and attempted to silence him by telling him to flee to Judah, Amos's homeland, and to prophesy there instead. He accused Amos of being a mere "seer" and challenged his authority to prophesy in Israel.

Amaziah's actions reflect his loyalty to the king and the established religious order than to the true worship of God. His opposition to Amos's message of judgment demonstrates the conflict between the prophetic voice, which speaks truth regardless of consequences, and the religious-political establishment, which often seeks to maintain the status quo.

Amaziah stopped Amos from prophesying in Israel. He did not want to see or hear Amos carrying out his prophetic ministry in Bethel, stating that Bethel was the king's sanctuary and the royal residence. When people are trying to avoid the truth, they come up with all sorts of excuses to avoid it. However, they are engaging in a vain activity when they try to halt the truth. You cannot stop the truth and when you try to do that, the truth will stop you.

Truth is truth, whether it is proclaimed or not. We are to yield ourselves to it, if we want a life full of peace and prosperity because it is truth that sustains our universe, and it is truth that sustains us.

One sure way of pronouncing a curse on your life is trying to stop God's messenger like Amaziah did. When you fight God's messengers, you are fighting against the Almighty. Can you defeat Him? Fighting against the almighty is separating yourself from infinite power and choosing a battle against that infinite power.

As a result of stopping Amos from prophesying, a curse was pronounced upon Amaziah's house. Amos told him that his wife would be a prostitute in the city. He added by telling him that his sons and daughters would fall by the sword, his land would be divided by a measuring line, and he would die in a pagan land. He was also told that Israel shall surely go from its land into exile.

Exercise leadership and authority with wisdom and love. Leading with wisdom and love means leading in conformity with the commandments of God. When you do that, countless blessings will flow to you that there will not be enough room to receive them. However, when you do not do that, curses will befriend you and your life will be miserable like Amaziah's.

Before God Does Something

Amos 3:7-8 (KJ21) - "[7] Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. [8] The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Amos faithfully delivered God's messages of impending judgment on Israel for their sins, even though these messages were unpopular and would have been difficult to proclaim. His willingness to speak harsh truths showed his deep faith in God's sovereignty and justice.

God is honorable. He does nothing without first revealing it to His servants. No one when they get punished by God can have an excuse and say that God did not warn them. Before He punished people in the Bible, He would first warn them, and He would warn them by sending them a prophet. God works the same way today; He uses various methods and people to warn us. Not only does God reveal to us what is major, He also reveals to us things which we may consider to be minor.

We see DeJa'Vu' whereby we are in a place or a situation for the first time but feel that we have seen it before but cannot remember where we saw it. God might have revealed to us that situation earlier (in our dreams or imaginations) before experiencing it. Many people will say that they have seen dreams which have come to pass. God revealed those things to those people before the event happened.

Delivered Unpopular Messages of Judgment

Amos 4:12 (KJ21) - "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

The phrase "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel" refers to the impending judgment that God is about to bring upon the nation because of their continued disobedience. The specific judgment isn't detailed in this verse, but the surrounding passages indicate that it involves severe consequences that could lead to Israel's downfall.

The latter part of the verse, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," is striking. It is both a warning and a declaration of an impending divine encounter. This phrase suggests that Israel is about to encounter God in a direct and decisive manner. It is a call for the nation to prepare for a meeting with the Almighty, where they will be held accountable for their actions. In a judicial sense, it’s as if God is summoning Israel to a courtroom where their sins will be exposed, and judgment will be rendered.

The tone of the statement means that this meeting with God will not be a peaceful one. Instead, it suggests an impending judgment, where God, as a righteous judge, will confront the nation for their unrepentant hearts and wicked deeds. The "meeting" is not a time of fellowship or reconciliation but rather a moment of reckoning.

The phrase also implies the inevitability of what is about to happen. Despite God's patience and many opportunities for repentance, Israel's refusal to turn from their ways has led to this moment. Now, they must face the consequences of their choices.

The command to "prepare" means that there is still a moment for Israel to reflect, acknowledge their sins, and turn to God in repentance. However, the text suggests that time is running out, and the opportunity for repentance is closing quickly. The same applies to us today. The opportunity for repentance is closing quickly and we do not know when it will close on us. Therefore, we should quickly repent and change our ways.

Condemnation of Social Injustice

Amos 5:11 (KJ21) - "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them."

Amos condemned the exploitation of the poor and the corruption of the wealthy. People do injustice to people so that they may gain while other people lose. It is lack of faith in God's providence that makes them behave that way. When you rob someone, you may think that you are adding to yourself by taking away from him. In reality, you are adding more to him and taking away from yourself. The laws of God that govern the universe set no room for injustice to succeed. Amos says that they would build permanent houses of stone, but they would not live in them. He also says that they would plant pleasant vineyards but would not drink wine from them.

When an onlooker sees an unrighteous person building a large house to completion, they may think that the wicked person is prospering. When we see sinners planting vineyards and they grow to full fruition, we may think that they are doing well in life. That is why most people wrongfully think that evil succeeds. We are wrong. Evil never succeeds.

Evil may seem to succeed but it never succeeds. Imagine completing a house and not living inside it or planting a vineyard and not enjoying its fruits. That shows how unrighteous efforts go to waste. It would have been better if they had not built or planted. Therefore, have faith and show your faith through good and righteous works. By faith, Amos condemned injustice in society. You should do the same thing too.

Amos 5:24 (KJ21) - "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Amos emphasized the importance of practicing justice and righteousness over empty religious rituals. Worship is not merely rituals as many of us take it to be. True worship should be part and parcel of our daily lives. Everything we do is an act of worship. It won't make sense to pray seven times a day while we choose to rebel against God's law. Righteousness from us should flow with vigor like a mighty stream.

Warning of Imminent Judgment

Amos 6:14 (KJ21) - "But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness."

Amos warned Israel of the judgment that was to come because of their disobedience. He prophesied that God would afflict the Israelites from the entering of Hamath to the river of the wilderness. Hamath is a city located in northern Syria. It was a significant city in ancient times, often mentioned in the Bible as a northern boundary of the Israelites.

Therefore, when God said He would afflict them from Hamath, He meant that He would punish them from the Northern border to all the parts of Israel including the wilderness. God gives warnings as a chance for people to repent. However, if they continue in rebellion, the only option He is left with is to destroy them.

Vision of the Plumb Line

Amos 7:7-8 (KJ21) "[7] Thus He showed me: and behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. [8] And the Lord said unto me, 'Amos, what seest thou?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then said the Lord, 'Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore.'"

In this vision, Amos sees the Lord standing by a wall that was built using a plumb line. A plumb line is a tool used by builders to ensure that a wall is perfectly vertical and straight. It’s a simple device, consisting of a string with a weight at the end, that relies on gravity to give an absolute vertical reference.

The wall represents Israel, God's chosen people. Just as a wall built with a plumb line is meant to be straight, so was Israel intended to be upright, righteous, and aligned with God's laws and commandments. The fact that the Lord was seen standing by the wall suggests that He was evaluating or measuring it to see if it remains true to its intended purpose.

The Lord holding the plumb line signifies that God is about to judge Israel based on His standard of righteousness. The plumb line in His hand represents divine measurement, showing that God is not arbitrarily judging but is using an objective standard to assess the moral and spiritual state of His people.

By asking Amos what he sees, God is engaging the prophet, ensuring that Amos understands the vision's significance. Amos responds accurately, indicating that he sees the plumb line. This interaction highlights the importance of the symbol and sets the stage for the Lord’s declaration.

"I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel": Here, God declares that He would place this plumb line among His people. This means that God is now actively measuring Israel against His standard of righteousness. It is a moment of divine assessment, where God is checking to see if Israel is upright and true to His covenant.

The use of a plumb line implies that any deviation from God’s standard would be exposed. If the wall (Israel) was found to be leaning or crooked, it indicated moral and spiritual failure. Just as a wall that is not straight is condemned as unsafe and unfit, so too would Israel be judged if they have strayed from God’s righteous path.

"I will not again pass by them anymore": This phrase is crucial. It signals that God’s patience has run out, and He would no longer overlook or tolerate Israel's sins. In earlier instances, God had "passed by" their transgressions, offering mercy, and withholding judgment. Now, however, God was declaring that judgment was imminent and unavoidable. The time for correction and repentance has passed, and God was ready to execute His judgment based on the standard He has set.

Just as God measured Israel with a plumb line, individuals and communities are encouraged to measure their lives against God’s standards. Are they living uprightly? Are they aligned with God’s will? The passage challenges believers to consider whether their lives are "true" according to God's divine standard or if they have strayed from His path.

The vision of the plumb line underscores the seriousness of spiritual deviation. Just as a wall that is out of alignment can eventually collapse, a life or community that is not aligned with God’s righteousness is in danger of moral and spiritual collapse. The passage warns that God will not ignore such deviations forever; there will be consequences.

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Vision of the Basket of Summer Fruit

Amos 8:1-2 (KJ21) - "[1] Thus hath the Lord God shown unto me: and behold, a basket of summer fruit. [2] And He said, 'Amos, what seest thou?' And I said, 'A basket of summer fruit.' Then said the Lord unto me, 'The end is come upon My people of Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore.'"

In this vision, Amos sees a basket filled with summer fruit. Summer fruit, in the context of ancient Israel, refers to ripe fruit that is harvested at the end of the growing season. The mention of "summer fruit" is key because it suggests that the fruit is at its peak, fully mature, and ready to be eaten. However, it also implies that the fruit is perishable and will soon decay if not consumed promptly.

The basket of summer fruit symbolizes the people of Israel and the state of their spiritual and moral condition. Just as the fruit is ripe and at the end of its season, Israel has reached the end of its period of grace. The ripeness of the fruit indicates that the nation is fully ripe for judgment. The time for repentance has passed, and now the consequences of their actions are imminent.

Similar to previous visions, God asks Amos to describe what he sees, which engages the prophet and ensures that the message is clear and understood. Amos correctly identifies the basket of summer fruit, which then leads to God’s pronouncement. "The end is come upon My people of Israel": This is a solemn declaration from God. The vision of the summer fruit is directly linked to this announcement of "the end." Just as the fruit is at the end of its ripening process, so too is Israel at the end of God’s patience. The phrase "the end" signifies that the time for divine judgment has arrived. There is a finality to this statement, indicating that Israel's period of grace and opportunity for repentance is over.

"I will not again pass by them anymore": This echoes a similar statement from Amos 7:8, where God declared that He would no longer overlook Israel’s sins. The phrase means that God will no longer withhold judgment or extend mercy as He had done in the past. The time for leniency has ended, and now judgment is certain and imminent.

While the vision was specific to Israel, the message carries universal themes applicable to all people and nations. It serves as a warning that persistent sin and rebellion against God lead to inevitable judgment. It also emphasizes the importance of responding to God’s calls for repentance before it is too late.

The passage challenges readers to consider their own spiritual state. Are they like the summer fruit, appearing ripe on the outside but on the verge of decay? Are they heeding God's warnings, or are they ignoring them, assuming that there will always be more time to repent? The vision of the summer fruit reminds us that time is finite and that there is a point where the opportunity for mercy ends, and judgment begins.

Intercession on Behalf of Israel

Amos 7:1-6 (AMP) - "[1] Thus the Lord God showed me [a vision], and behold, He was forming a swarm of locusts when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king's mowing. [2] And when the locusts had finished eating the plants of the land, then I said, "O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob stand, For he is so small [that he cannot endure this]?" [3] The Lord revoked this sentence. "It shall not take place," said the Lord. [4] Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, the Lord God called for punishment with fire, and it devoured the great deep [underground sources of water] and began to consume the land. [5] Then I said, "O Lord God, please stop! How can Jacob stand, For he is so small [that he cannot endure this]?" [6] The Lord revoked this sentence. "This also shall not be," said the Lord God."

Despite delivering harsh messages, Amos interceded for Israel. God showed Amos a vision of a swarm of locusts devouring the land when the crops began to sprout. Amos interceded for the Israelites by telling God that the Israelites were too small to bear that punishment. The Lord heard the prayer of His servant Amos and revoked that sentence.

The Lord showed Amos another vision of fire that was going to devour the great deep and consume the land. Amos saw that the punishment was too much for the Israelites to bear. He interceded for them and the Lord heard the prayers of Amos and turned away His punishment from them.

If you heard Amos delivering harsh messages, you would have thought he hated the Israelites. When he interceded for them, it was clear that he didn't hate them. It was also clear that he loved his enemies since some of those he was interceding for were his enemies. God heard the prayers of Amos when he interceded for the Israelites.

James 5:16 (AMP) - "Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored. The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]."

The effectual fervent prayer of Prophet Amos availed much when he interceded for the Israelites.

Rejection by the Religious Establishment

Amos 7:10-13 (KJ21) - "[10] Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, 'Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. [11] For thus Amos saith, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land."' [12] Also Amaziah said unto Amos, 'O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. [13] But prophesy not again any more at Bethel, for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.'"

Amos faced opposition from the religious leaders of his time. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, accused him of conspiring against the king. The opposition that Amos faced was not from a well-known sinner or any other layperson. It was from Amaziah the priest of Bethel.

Amaziah told King Jeroboam that Amos had conspired against him. He told him that the land was not able to bear the words of the prophet since Amos had prophesied doom against Jeroboam and Israel. He said that Jeroboam would die by the sword and Israel would be led into captivity out of their own land.

As a result of these prophecies, Amaziah stopped Amos from prophesying in Bethel. When you are serving God as a Christian, the greatest opposition you will face is from the church, especially your own church. Opposition from fellow believers is tailored to make you feel strongly discouraged. Opposition from the church will make you more discouraged than opposition from the open enemy kingdom. This is because you are expecting people to have unity as you are one body in Christ.

When your expectations of unity and support are not met, your faith gets shaken and if you are not careful you might leave the church. Most times, if you take careful consideration, you will realize

that the ones opposing you are fewer than the ones who are on your side. The reason why we may think they are more is because we often focus on what we don't have instead of what we already have. We focus more on scarcity than abundance. Adam and Eve were given all the trees in the garden to eat from, but they chose to focus on that **one** which they were told not to eat from.

Many who were once the most committed people in the church have left the church because of such opposition. Do not stop going to church because of opposition. You may move to another church but do not stop attending church services. Do not stop serving God because people are not appreciating your service. Focus on God and on His glory and you will have no stress about who is appreciating you or not. When you focus on God, no wind of opposition will move you.

Prophecy Against the Nations

Amos 1:3 (KJ21) - "[3] Thus saith the Lord: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron. [4] But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. [5] I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the scepter from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir," saith the Lord. [6] Thus saith the Lord: "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they carried away captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom. [7] But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof. [8] And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the scepter from Ashkelon; and I will turn Mine hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish," saith the Lord God. [9] Thus saith the Lord: "For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. [10] But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, which shall devour the palaces thereof." [11] Thus saith the Lord: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever."

Amos not only prophesied against Israel but also pronounced judgment against neighboring nations. In Amos 1:3, 6, 9, and 11, Amos declares God’s judgment on these nations. God loves everybody as He created everybody. He wants everyone to live a blessed life by obeying His commandments. The Israelites might have thought at some points that God loved them alone, but they were wrong. God had chosen them and blessed them so that through them, they can bless other nations.

Denunciation of False Security

Amos 6:1 (AMP) - "Woe (judgment is coming) to those who are at ease and carefree in Zion (Judah) And to those on the mountain of Samaria who feel secure, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes."

Amos warned against the false security that the people of Israel felt because of their military strength and wealth. The people of Israel, particularly the wealthy and powerful, were living in luxury and ease. They believed that their material wealth, military strength, and political alliances made them secure from any threats.

This complacency led them to ignore the moral and spiritual decay within their society. Amos warned them that their comfort and confidence were based on false premises. Their wealth and power would not protect them from the coming judgment of God.

Amos was particularly concerned with the rampant social injustice in Israel. The elite class was oppressing the poor, and the judicial system was corrupt. Amos warned them because their wealth was often accumulated through exploitation, and their indifference to the suffering of others was abhorrent to God. The prophet emphasized that God's justice would prevail, and those who were "at ease" would face the consequences of their actions.

The people of Israel, particularly those in Samaria, felt secure because they were in a fortified and strategically important region. They considered themselves untouchable because of their military defenses and political alliances. Amos warned them that their security was an illusion. God’s judgment was imminent, and no number of physical defenses or alliances could save them from His wrath.

People had become spiritually apathetic. Their prosperity had led them to neglect their relationship with God and to ignore His laws. They were more focused on their own comfort and success than on righteousness and obedience to God. Amos warned them that their spiritual complacency was leading them away from God, and they were unaware of the impending judgment.

Amos' warnings were not merely general cautions; they were specific pronouncements of divine judgment. God had been patient, but the time of reckoning was approaching. The "woe" in Amos 6:1 indicated that judgment was inevitable for those who were complacent, arrogant, and indifferent to the will of God. Amos warned them because he was sent by God to call the people to repentance before it was too late.

It is dangerous to delight in your comfort zone. A Christian should aim to go beyond their comfort zone daily. Proverbs 4:18 (AMP) - "But the path of the just (righteous) is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until [it reaches its full strength and glory in] the perfect day."

The light of the righteous needs to shine brighter each day. Your light today should be brighter than it was yesterday meaning you need to do better today than you did yesterday. Doing better (improving) requires getting out of one's comfort zone. The Israelites were at ease, and some were on the mountain of Samaria feeling secure.

There are certain things that make you feel at ease and secure, making you see no need to go out of your way. Employee jobs give one a sense of false security and many, by trusting too much in them, have failed to reach their potential.

Some people have fostered for themselves a false sense of security by trusting in the wealth and prominence of their families. When something happens to that wealth and power, some get into depression because they do not know what to do devoid of that security. The only person we should trust in is God. He is the only ultimate ever-present security.

Hope for Future Restoration

Amos 9:11-15 (AMP) - "[11] In that day I shall raise up and restore the fallen tabernacle (booth) of David, And wall up its breaches [in the city walls]; I will also raise up and restore its ruins And rebuild it as it was in the days of old, [12] That they may possess the remnant of Edom (ancient

enemies) And all the nations that are called by My name," Says the Lord who does this. [13] "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "When the plowman shall overtake the one who gathers the harvest, And the one who treads the grapes [shall overtake] him who sows the seed [for the harvest continues until planting time]; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills shall melt [that is, everything that was once barren will overflow with streams of blessing]. [14] "Also I shall bring back the exiles of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the deserted and ruined cities and inhabit them: They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit. [15] "I will also plant them on their land, And they shall never again be uprooted from their land Which I have given them," Says the Lord your God."

After the Babylonian exile, the Israelites experienced a form of restoration. In 538 B.C., under the decree of King Cyrus of Persia, the Jewish exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). They rebuilt the city walls, restored the temple, and began to reestablish their religious and social life in the land. This historical event is often seen as a partial fulfillment of the restoration prophecies, including the one in Amos.

However, the restoration during the post-exilic period did not fully match the grand vision of total and everlasting peace, prosperity, and security described in Amos 9:11-15. The Israelites faced ongoing struggles, including foreign domination and internal challenges, and the full restoration of David's kingdom was not realized in the way that the prophets envisioned.

In the New Testament, this passage from Amos is quoted in Acts 15:16-17 during the Council of Jerusalem. The early church leaders, including James, interpreted the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" as the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God through faith in Christ. This interpretation saw the prophecy as being fulfilled in the expansion of God's kingdom beyond Israel to include all nations.

Amos 9:11-15 points not only to a historical restoration but also to an eschatological (end-times) fulfillment. The "tabernacle of David" is often interpreted as symbolizing the Davidic kingdom, which Christians believe finds its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is seen as the heir to David's throne. In this view, the ultimate restoration of Israel and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom on earth are still to come. The full restoration of God's people will happen when all creation experiences the fullness of God's promises, including peace, justice, and abundance.

In the restoration message to the Israelites, God promised them that they will overtake those who were ahead of them. Restoration gives you more than you had before. It elevates you to a position that you were not in before. They were promised to possess the remnant of Edom. The plowman would overtake the one who gathers the harvest and the one who treads the grapes would overtake the one who sows the seeds.

It is dangerous to be stagnant in God's mission. Other people who are earnestly seeking God will soon overtake you. Amos prophesied that the exiles shall rebuild the deserted and ruined cities and inhabit them. He prophesied that everything that was once barren will overflow with streams of blessing. The wicked plant vines and crops but do not eat from them. In other words, they labor, bear fruits but do not enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The righteous, on the other hand, enjoy the fruits of their labor. God promised the Israelites that they would enjoy the fruits of their labor when He gave them the restoration message. God promised that when He shall plant them in their land, they will never be uprooted. When God plants you, no one can uproot you.

Amos demonstrated his faith through his obedience to God's call, his boldness in confronting social injustice, his courage in the face of opposition, his intercession for the people, and his commitment to delivering God's message of judgment. His life and ministry exemplify a deep trust in God's purposes and a willingness to act upon that faith, regardless of personal cost.

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJ21) - “[8] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; [10] but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Obedience and submission to God is rooted in acknowledging that God is our Creator. When we acknowledge God as our Creator, we will seek to obey His commands. The Sabbath commandment points us to God as the Creator.

"Christ is our tower of strength, and Satan can have no power over the soul who walks with God in humility of mind.... If we lean to our own wisdom, our wisdom will prove to be foolishness. But

if we will give ourselves unselfishly to the work, never swerving in the least from principle, the Lord will throw about us the everlasting arms and will prove a mighty helper."— Youth's Instructor, December 22, 1898, Ellen G. White.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You for the rich blessings that You have bestowed upon me. Please help me to always do justice and righteousness. Give me the courage to proclaim the truth always even when it is unpopular. Help me to speak boldly but with love against injustice and oppression. Bless my country's leaders and all citizens. Forgive their sins and help them to crave humility and righteousness. Lord, we hope in You for a future complete restoration. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Look at your family members and other members in your lineage. Find out the character trait that you would like to emulate from each one. Write it down.
2. Look at the negative character traits that seem to have been inherited and pray against them.
3. Pray for God to show you your unique purpose. Amos was not from a prophetic lineage, but he became a prophet.
4. What is that one truth that you would like to say but you are feeling scared? Ask God to give you the courage to proclaim it.
5. Do the people around you do things that annoy you? Remember to pray about them daily for God to change those evil traits.

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CHAPTER 74

FAITH LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Even though the book of Obadiah is the shortest in the Old Testament,

Its message holds a profound truth, divinely sent.

From its pages, a lesson we can all embrace,

A timeless message of God's justice and grace.

Obadiah, a prophet, his voice so clear,

Declared God's judgment on Edom, a nation to fear.

Though they dwelled in the clefts of rocks so high,

Their pride led to downfall, as the Lord did prophesy.

Edom's arrogance, their cruelty displayed,

Their actions against Israel, God's people, dismayed.

But in Obadiah's book, we find hope anew,

A promise of restoration, a message for me and you.

For even in our weakness, when we stumble and fall,

God's mercy and forgiveness are available to all.

In the book of Obadiah, a glimpse we see,

Of God's unfailing love, His grace so free.

So let us heed this lesson from days of old,

To humbly walk with God, in His love, be bold.

For though our days may be short, our faith held fast,

In God's Word, God's love will forever last.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

One of the Prophets that the writer of Hebrews 11 meant in the above verse is Prophet Obadiah. The book itself provides little information about the prophet Obadiah. His name means "Servant of Yahweh" or "Worshiper of Yahweh." Scholars believe that he likely lived in the 6th century BCE.

The exact date of the book's composition is a matter of debate, but it is generally placed after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Obadiah's prophecy focuses on the destruction of Edom, which is associated with its role in the downfall of Jerusalem.

The Book of Obadiah is primarily addressed to the nation of Edom, a neighboring country to ancient Israel. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel), and they lived in the region southeast of Israel, including the mountainous area known as Mount Seir. The Edomites were known for their historical hostility toward the Israelites.

The historical context of the Book of Obadiah is closely tied to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. During this period, the Babylonian Empire, under King Nebuchadnezzar II, besieged and destroyed Jerusalem, leading to the exile of many Israelites to Babylon. Edom, the neighboring nation, took advantage of this situation. Instead of offering support to their fellow Israelites, the Edomites either actively participated in the destruction or did nothing to help.

Obadiah 1:1-3 (NKJV) – "[1] The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the Lord, And a messenger has been sent among the nations, *saying,* "Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle"): [2] "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised. [3] The pride of your heart has deceived you, *You* who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; *You* who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'

The pride of the Edomite people made them think in their heart that nobody can bring them down. Pride deceives. Pride is caused by doubt (lack of faith) and leads to more doubt. Sin causes one to think that they are higher than they are. It makes one think that they are more prosperous than they are. Therefore, the Edomite people felt unconquerable due to Edom's pride.

Isaiah 14:13-14 (KJV) – "[13] For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: [14] I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

"In great mercy, according to His divine character, God bore long with Lucifer. The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable. Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; for a time he had feared to express the workings and imaginings of his mind; yet he did not dismiss them. He did not see whither he was drifting. But such efforts as infinite love and wisdom only could devise, were made to convince him of his error. His disaffection was proved to be without cause, and he was made to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt. Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Psalm 145:17); that the divine statutes are just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion. He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust." – Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 39.1, Ellen G. White.

"Satan fell because of his ambition to be equal with God. He desired to enter into the divine counsels and purposes, from which he was excluded by his own inability, as a created being, to comprehend the wisdom of the Infinite One. It was this ambitious pride that led to his rebellion, and by the same means he seeks to cause the ruin of man." – The Faith I Live By, Page 68, Ellen G. White.

Satan's pride made him think he could overthrow the government of the Almighty and take charge of the entire universe. His lack of humility caused him to be cast out of heaven. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18-19 (KJV) – "[18] Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. [19] Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

Daniel 4:30-33 (KJV) – "[30] The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? [31] While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. [32] And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. [33] The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

King Nebuchadnezzar thought that it was by his power that he had been able to build Babylon and conquer nations. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he was driven from men and put to eat grass like the oxen. From the majestic status of a king, he was moved to the forest to live with animals. That circumstance made him get saved and write Daniel chapter 4 and acknowledge that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17).

God wants you to have faith. Therefore, He can look at the way you are heading and realize that the way you have chosen will lead to more doubt for you and the lives of the people watching you. Therefore, He brings challenging circumstances to straighten you and give you more faith.

God's will was not to maliciously punish Nebuchadnezzar but to bring the Babylonian king closer to Him. God's will was not to malevolently punish the Edomites but to bring them closer to Him. That is why He had to warn them through Prophet Obadiah, allowing them to change their ways.

Obadiah 1:7 (NKJV) –"[7] All the men in your confederacy Shall force you to the border; The men at peace with you Shall deceive you *and* prevail against you. *Those who eat* your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it."

When you lack faith, the men at peace with you will no longer be at peace with you. An excellent example is criminals. People are not at peace with criminals because of the threat of insecurity that they cause. The police arrest them, and sometimes, they murder them.

Someone caught doing ungodly acts is not easily trusted; thus, the people are not at peace with him. They may possess the highest academic qualifications, but no one can give them a lucrative opportunity because they don't trust them.

Sin is always caused by doubting God's Word. People doubt that God is the provider. Therefore, they resort to stealing, prostitution, drug dealing, etc. These acts cause enmity between them and their fellow men, as their actions clearly show that they do not love their neighbors as themselves.

On the other hand, righteousness causes people who were once not at peace with you to be at peace with you. Proverbs 16:7 (KJV) – "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

What did Edom do that made the Lord God resolve to punish them?

Obadiah 1:10-14 (NKJV) – "[10] "For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever. [11] In the day that you stood on the other side—In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, When foreigners entered his gates And cast lots for Jerusalem—Even you *were* as one of them. [12] "But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother In the day of his captivity; Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction; Nor should you have spoken proudly In the day of distress. [13] You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction. In the day of their calamity, Nor laid *hands* on their substance In the day of their calamity. [14] You should not have stood at the crossroads To cut off those among them who escaped; Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained In the day of distress."

The Edomites troubled the Israelites when they were facing calamity. God was punishing the Israelites, and the people of Edom took advantage to worsen their wounds. When God is punishing people, we should let Him do His work and not interfere by helping Him to punish them. This is because God is a God of justice and knows the just punishment to prescribe to each sinner. Humans are not always fair because we have limited knowledge of people and things. Therefore, punishing people can be unfair because we do not fully understand their actions.

Obadiah 1:15-16 (NKJV) – "[15] "For the day of the Lord upon all the nations *is* near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head. [16] For as you drank on My holy mountain, *So* shall all the nations drink continually; Yes, they shall drink, and swallow, And they shall be as though they had never been."

God punishes evil, and He rewards righteousness. The Bible says in Matthew 7:12 (KJV) – "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Edom felt pain when the Lord passed this judgment upon them. When God punished them, they probably remembered what they had done to the Israelites. God can sometimes bring us to similar situations, like the people we once afflicted so that we can feel the pain they felt.

Proverbs 26:27 (KJV) – "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him." The people of Edom dug a pit by afflicting the Israelites; indeed, they fell in it. Haman was hanged on the gallows, which he had built to hang Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

Obadiah 1:17-21 (KJV) – "[17] "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. [18] The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau *shall be* stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau," For the Lord has spoken. [19] The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, And the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria. Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead. [20] And the captives of this host of the children of Israel *Shall possess the land* of the Canaanites As far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad Shall possess the cities of the South. [21] Then savior shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

Verse 17 begins with a message of hope and deliverance for the house of Jacob (the Israelites) on Mount Zion, which is often associated with the presence of God. This verse emphasizes that God is the source of deliverance and holiness. Verses 18 and 19 prophesy the triumph of the house of Jacob (Israel) over the house of Esau (Edom).

The metaphor of Jacob being a fire and Joseph a flame suggests their strength and victory. Esau, on the other hand, is compared to stubble, signifying their destruction. This conveys a message of divine justice and the eventual vindication of God's people.

These verses speak to the restoration and expansion of the territory of Israel. They will possess the land of their enemies, including the mountains of Esau, Philistia, Ephraim, Samaria, Gilead, and more. This reflects God's promise to the Israelites to inherit the land He had given to their ancestors.

Verse 20 mentions the return of the captives of Israel. This message of redemption and restoration indicates that those who were taken into exile will possess the land again. Verse 21 speaks of saviors coming to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau. This could be interpreted as righteous leaders or deliverers God raises to execute justice. Ultimately, the passage underscores that the kingdom belongs to the Lord, emphasizing God's sovereignty and authority.

God will fulfill His promises to His people. Even in times of adversity and exile, faith involves trusting that God will accomplish His purposes and fulfill His covenant. God is a just judge who will hold the nations accountable for their actions.

Faith involves trusting in God's justice, even when it seems delayed. Faith involves hope in restoration and redemption, believing God can turn the tide of adversity and bring about renewal and victory. We are reminded of God's sovereignty over all nations and ultimate authority. Faith involves acknowledging God's rule and aligning one's life with His kingdom.

Leviticus 19:2-4 (KJV) – "[2] Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy. [3] Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. [4] Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God."

Edom disobeyed God, and they did not repent. Thus, God passed judgment upon them, and He punished them. We should obey God by loving Him and loving our fellow men. That is true faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you with hearts filled with gratitude for the lessons we have learned from the book of Obadiah. We find profound wisdom in its brevity, and in its message, we discover both correction and hope.

Lord, we pray for the humility to recognize our pride and arrogance, just as Edom displayed. Please help us avoid the pitfalls of self-righteousness and cruelty and cultivate a spirit of compassion and empathy toward others.

Thank you for the reminder that justice belongs to you alone, and vengeance is not ours to seek. Teach us to trust your perfect timing and judgment, knowing that you will make everything right.

As we reflect on the restoration promised in Obadiah, may it serve as a beacon of hope in our lives. Grant us the faith to trust in your promises, even in the face of adversity.

May the lessons from the book of Obadiah guide our actions, soften our hearts, and draw us closer to you, O Lord. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

Self-Examination: Reflect on your own life and identify areas where pride or arrogance may have taken root. Take time for self-examination and humility, addressing any attitudes or behaviors that do not align with God's love and grace.

Practice Forgiveness: If you hold grudges or have unresolved conflicts with others, consider taking steps to forgive and reconcile. Remember the message of restoration from Obadiah and seek reconciliation where possible.

Extend Compassion: Make an effort to show compassion and empathy toward those in need. Volunteer at a local charity, donate to a worthy cause, or lend a helping hand to someone facing difficulties.

Study Other Minor Prophets: Explore the other Minor Prophets in the Old Testament, such as Amos, Hosea, or Micah. These books also contain valuable lessons about justice, righteousness, and God's love.

Prayer and Reflection: Dedicate time to prayer and meditation on the themes of justice, humility, and God's sovereignty as presented in Obadiah. Seek God's guidance in applying these principles to your life.

Read and Discuss: Engage in a group study or book club discussion centered around the book of Obadiah. Share insights, reflections, and practical applications with others to deepen your understanding.

Support Reconciliation Initiatives: Look for organizations or initiatives that promote reconciliation and peace in conflict-affected areas. Consider supporting or getting involved in these efforts.

Educate Others: Share the lessons from Obadiah with friends, family, and your community. Please encourage others to read the book and discuss its relevance in today's world.

Set Aside Vengeance: If you have been seeking revenge or harboring feelings of vengeance, consciously let go of those desires. Trust in God's justice and focus on healing and forgiveness.

Live Humbly: In your daily life, strive to live humbly before God and others. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude and acknowledge your dependence on God's guidance and grace.

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CHAPTER 75

THE FAITH OF PROPHET JONAH

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The Word of God came to Jonah,

He was a prophet of great honor,

God sent him to Nineveh to warn,

He avoided going for his faith was not strong.

God has the whole world in His hands,

Jonah proved this when he tried to escape to distant lands,

God brought a great wind that shook the ship,

Not to trouble them but to build a strong relationship.

Jonah understood that he was the problem,

He told them to throw him to the sea, and the waters would be calm,

Even though he sinned, he was not forgotten,

God gave him a second chance to tell Nineveh of its awaiting harm.

The second time, Jonah went to Nineveh with no hesitation,

He did not delay for his experience caused him to have some meditation,

Jonah warned the people that God wanted to destroy their nation,

They repented and turned their ways, thus making a true confession.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Prophet Jonah was one of the prophets that the writer of Hebrews meant when he said, "for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Jonah prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam, and he was a native of Gath-Hepher.

Jonah 1:1-4 (NKJV) – "[1] Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, [2] "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." [3] But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

"As the prophet thought of the difficulties and seeming impossibilities of this commission, he was tempted to question the wisdom of the call. From a human viewpoint it seemed as if nothing could be gained by proclaiming such a message in that proud city. He forgot for the moment that the God whom he served was all-wise and all-powerful. While he hesitated, still doubting, Satan overwhelmed him with discouragement. The prophet was seized with a great dread, and he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish." Going to Joppa, and finding there a ship ready to sail, "he paid the fare thereof and went down into it, to go with them." Verse 3." – Prophets and Kings, Page 266.2, Ellen G. White.

"In the charge given him, Jonah had been entrusted with a heavy responsibility; yet He who had bidden him go was able to sustain His servant and grant him success. Had the prophet obeyed unquestioningly, he would have been spared many bitter experiences, and would have been blessed abundantly. Yet in the hour of Jonah's despair the Lord did not desert him. Through a series of trials and strange providences, the prophet's confidence in God and in His infinite power to save was to be revived." – Prophets and Kings, Page 266.3, Ellen G. White.

Jonah was the son of Amittai. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Jonah means *dove*, and Amittai means *my truth*. God sent Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh in the ancient kingdom of Assyria. He was sent there because there was great wickedness in that city. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn them.

Amos 3:7 (KJV) – "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." God does not do anything in this world without first revealing it to His servants in this world. Before He sent a flood, He told Noah about it. Before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, He told Abraham about it. Before He returns the second time to take us home, He has already told us that in various places in the Bible.

Whatever God feels is significant for you to know, He lets you know. For example, He knows that it is vital for you to know that the Sabbath is specifically on the seventh day of the week. Therefore, He has used various people in the Bible to spread that message across different times. Now that we have seen the pattern God uses to work let us go back to the story of Jonah.

God did not want to destroy Nineveh without letting the people of Nineveh know. Therefore, He used Jonah to go and warn them. We have often accused God of being unfair, but God is very fair and just. He lets you know of the consequences you will face once you have chosen a particular sinful path so that you don't blame Him if any calamity befalls you.

Even though Noah and his family were the only human beings saved in the ark, they were not the only ones with the message. While building an ark, Noah preached to the people for 120 years. Unfortunately, they rejected the message.

Nobody who has access to the Bible will have an excuse on the final Judgment Day to tell God they did not know which day was the Sabbath or what percentage of our income we should return as tithe. The fact that the Omnipotent God did not destroy the city before sending someone to warn them shows how merciful and loving God is. It clearly shows that it was not God's priority to punish the people at Nineveh but to save them.

Jonah 1:9-12 (NKJV) – "[9] So he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*." [10] Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. [11] Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be

calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous. [12] And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me."

"As the mariners were beseeching their heathen gods for help, the master of the ship, distressed beyond measure, sought out Jonah and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Verse 6." – Prophets and Kings, Page 267.2, Ellen G. White.

"But the prayers of the man who had turned aside from the path of duty brought no help. The mariners, impressed with the thought that the strange violence of the storm betokened the anger of their gods, proposed as a last resort the casting of lots, "that we may know," they said, "for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" – Prophets and Kings, Page 267.3, Ellen G. White.

Jonah avoided going to Nineveh. He probably feared that the people might be hostile to him if he told them the truth. Therefore, he disobeyed God and decided to run away to Tarshish from the presence of God. We often fear preaching to people the truth because we think they will hate us, and some may say we are judging them. Thus, in spreading God's message, we are led by doubt instead of faith.

We have formed assumptions in our minds of people which are not always true. Some Christian preachers avoid approaching Islamic people to tell them the gospel because they have assumed a Muslim can't convert to Christianity. The great gospel commission tells us to go and preach to all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Everybody in this world deserves to hear God's Word. Everybody has the right to know the truth.

Jonah thought that he could escape from God, but he could not. As he was in the ship, God sent a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest (Jonah 1:5). The ship seemed to be breaking. Since Jonah was a prophet, he spiritually sensed that he was the problem. He told the people to throw him into the water if they wanted the sea to be calm. He was ready to lose his life to save the other people's lives in the boat. He had acted with doubt before, but in this case, he

acted by faith. John 12:25 (KJV) – "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

We sometimes avoid spreading the gospel because we fear that our lives may be harmed. If you are in elementary school, high school, or university, you fear people will laugh at you or mock you and think you are not cool enough. God may send you to a community that is known to be hostile, but you fear going to them because you are afraid of losing your life. Job 2:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. [5] But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Satan knows that we fear losing our lives. Therefore, he uses this fear tactfully to cause us to sin. God saved Jonah's life by causing a fish to swallow him. And he was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

While in the belly of the fish, Jonah made this prayer:

Jonah 2:1-9 (NKJV) – "[1] Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. [2] And he said: "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *And* You heard my voice. [3] For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. [4] Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' [5] The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. [6] I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. [7] "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; And my prayer went *up* to You, Into Your holy temple. [8] "Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. [9] But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the Lord."

"At last Jonah had learned that "salvation belongeth unto the Lord." Psalm 3:8. With penitence and a recognition of the saving grace of God, came deliverance. Jonah was released from the perils of the mighty deep and was cast upon the dry land." – Prophets and Kings, Page 269.6, Ellen G. White.

Jonah did not blame God, for he knew he was wrong. God loves it when we acknowledge our sins and return to Him quickly. He loves it when we acknowledge that the situation He has placed us

in or allowed us to be in is the perfect situation. Jonah acknowledged that staying in the fish's belly was the perfect place for him. Therefore, he offered unto God a prayer of thanksgiving. Doubt is what makes us grumble and complain, but faith causes us to give thanks to God. He did not stay in the fish's belly for long. God spoke to the fish, which vomited Jonah onto dry land (Jonah 2:10).

Jonah 3:1-4 (NKJV) – "[1] Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, [2] "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." [3] So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent.* [4] And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out, saying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

God gave Prophet Jonah a second chance. God is a God who gives us numerous chances. He sent him to Nineveh again to preach His message. This time around, Jonah did not hesitate. Instead, he arose and went quickly to the land of Nineveh. The circumstance he had faced before when he was cast into the sea and swallowed by the fish was cruel, but this uncomfortable circumstance gave him the courage to face subsequent battles. When God gives you a second chance, do not waste it. Act by faith.

The situation you are going through now may be rough, but God may allow you to pass through it so that you have the courage to face more significant challenges in the future. God wants to bless you, but before He blesses you, He wants you to be mentally and spiritually strong so that you do not waste the blessing He is planning to give you. Jonah saw God's mighty hand giving him victory, making him not die in the sea and the belly of the fish. Therefore, he was sure that if God gave him victory in the sea, He would surely make him victorious in the city of Nineveh. Pastor Elizabeth Mokoro says, "Every victory gained gives an increase in courage. Every victory gained gives an increase in faith and determination."

Jonah 3:5-10 (NKJV) – "[5] So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. [6] Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. [7] And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. [8] But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. [9] Who can tell

if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? [10] Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."

"As king and nobles, with the common people, the high and the low, "repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matthew 12:41) and united in crying to the God of heaven, His mercy was granted them. He "saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." Jonah 3:10. Their doom was averted, the God of Israel was exalted and honored throughout the heathen world, and His law was revered. Not until many years later was Nineveh to fall a prey to the surrounding nations through forgetfulness of God and through boastful pride." – Prophets and Kings, Page 270.4, Ellen G. White.

The people of Nineveh were not as hostile as Jonah might have feared. Instead, they humbled themselves, fasted to seek God's forgiveness, and turned away from their evil ways. God saw their works (Jonah 3:10) and turned away from His fierce anger. We would all be blessed if we stopped evil and did the right thing. Malachi 3:7 (KJV) – "Return unto me, and I will return unto you."

"The lesson is for God's messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the true God as were the Ninevites of old. Christ's ambassadors are to point men to the nobler world, which has largely been lost sight of. According to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, the only city that will endure is the city whose builder and maker is God. With the eye of faith man may behold the threshold of heaven, flushed with God's living glory. Through His ministering servants the Lord Jesus is calling upon men to strive with sanctified ambition to secure the immortal inheritance. He urges them to lay up treasure beside the throne of God." – Prophets and Kings, Page 274.2, Ellen G. White.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, please give me the courage to spread your Word to everybody. Please help me to do whatever you have told me to do without fear. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Challenge yourself by telling a friend or a stranger about Jesus or inviting them to church.
2. What has God told you to do that you are trying to avoid? Start doing it immediately.

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CHAPTER 76

THE FAITH OF PROPHET MICAH

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Micah means who is like Yahweh?

When we acknowledge who God is, we will seek to faithfully obey,

A faithful prophet of God, in God, Micah received strength,

His book is profound, not long but great in depth.

Hear, all ye people, hearken, all ye earth,

Let God be your witness, be on the righteous path,

Repent now, and God will forgive your past,

Faith forward, in God we trust.

In the last day, the house of the Lord exalted above all mountains,

In the last day, all that's uncertain shall be certain,

In the last day, when God finally closes the curtain,

Where will you be? Are you still uncertain?

What shall I more say?

Trust God and follow Jesus the way,

Do you want a brighter day,

Trust God and know that Jesus is the only way.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - ”[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Background and History of the Prophet Micah

Micah was one of the twelve Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. A deep concern for social justice marked his prophetic ministry. Other factors that influenced his ministry were: the covenant relationship between God and Israel, and the coming judgment and restoration of the people of Judah.

Micah's ministry occurred during the 8th century B.C., overlapping with the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (approximately 740–700 B.C.). This was a tumultuous period in the history of Israel and Judah, marked by political instability, social injustice, and religious apostasy.

Micah was from Moresheth, a small town in the southwestern part of Judah. Unlike some other prophets who were closely associated with the royal court or urban centers, Micah's rural background gave him a unique perspective, often advocating for the poor and marginalized who were suffering under the corrupt practices of the elites in Jerusalem.

Micah's prophecies were directed primarily at the Southern Kingdom of Judah, though he also addressed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He condemned the idolatry, social injustice, and moral corruption prevalent among the leaders and people. Micah warned that these sins would lead to divine judgment, including the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. However, his message was not solely one of doom—Micah also spoke of a future restoration, with the coming of a righteous ruler from Bethlehem, who would bring peace and justice.

The name "Micah" (מִיכָה, Mikha) is of Hebrew origin. "Micah" means "Who is like Yahweh?" or "Who is like the Lord?" It is a rhetorical question that highlights the uniqueness and incomparability of God.

Micah, like the prophets mentioned in Hebrews 11, demonstrated great faith in proclaiming God's message, even when it was unpopular and met with resistance. He fearlessly called out the sins of the people and their leaders, knowing that his message of judgment would not be well-received.

Micah's ministry took place during a time of significant moral and spiritual decline in Judah. Despite the challenges, Micah remained faithful to his calling, delivering God's warnings and promises. His perseverance reflects the kind of faith celebrated in Hebrews 11, where prophets endured hardship because they trusted in God's ultimate plan.

Micah's prophecies include a vision of a future where justice and peace prevail under the reign of the Messiah. This hope for a better future is echoed in Hebrews 11, where the faithful look forward to the fulfillment of God's promises, even if they do not see them fully realized in their lifetime.

Micah's prophecy of a ruler from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) points to the coming of Jesus, who was both a king and a savior. This messianic expectation is in line with the faith described in Hebrews 11, where believers awaited the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan through the Messiah.

Key Themes in Micah's Prophecies

Judgment and Justice: Micah condemned the leaders of Judah for exploiting the poor and perverting justice. He was particularly critical of false prophets and corrupt priests who led the people astray. His message emphasized that true worship of God must be accompanied by just and righteous living.

The Destruction of Jerusalem: Micah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as a consequence of the people's sins. This prophecy was later fulfilled when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The Coming of the Messiah: One of the most famous prophecies in Micah is the prediction of the Messiah's birthplace in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). This prophecy is quoted in the New Testament as referring to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Restoration and Peace: Despite his warnings of judgment, Micah also offered hope for a future restoration. He spoke of a time when nations would beat their swords into plowshares, and there would be peace under the reign of the Messiah.

Trust in God's Justice: A Call to Have Integrity and Faith

Micah 1:2-4 (KJ21) - "[2] Hear, all ye people! Hearken, O earth, and all that is therein! And let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. [3] For behold, the Lord cometh

forth out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. [4] And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as waters that are poured down a steep place.

Micah is telling us that we should allow God to be our witness. God sees everything that we do, whether we allow Him or not. When Micah tells us to allow God to be our witness, he means that we should involve the Lord in our affairs. He also means that we should not do things to be seen by human witnesses. Matthew 6:1 (KJ21) - "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."

Micah encourages us to do things that God will be pleased when He witnesses. Jesus said in Matthew 6:4 (KJ21), "That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." Like Jesus, the Prophet Micah is calling for us to have integrity. Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one sees. Integrity is an act of faith and faith pleases God.

Prophet Micah tells us that God will come and tread on the high places of the earth (Micah 1:3). He goes on to say that mountains will melt under God, the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire. Mountains and valleys are natural landmarks. Micah 1:4 shows us how God rules over nature.

Mountains are humongous in size, strong and firm in structure, and they have been in existence for ages. Despite all this, we should know that they were formed by the One who is the ultimate rock of ages, One who has no beginning and no end. Great buildings built by men have been diminished but the natural tall buildings (mountains) built by God have never been destroyed. Micah shows us how great the power of God is when he tells us that the mountains will melt under him.

Matthew 17:20 (KJ21) - "And Jesus said unto them, 'Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, "Remove hence to yonder place," and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'" When you have faith in God, you can do all that is impossible with human beings for what is impossible with humans is possible with God.

The God who Unites

Micah 2:12 (KJ21) - “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.”

God promises to gather and assemble the remnant of Israel. He says that He will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah. Bozrah was an ancient city in Edom, a region southeast of Israel, often associated with the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. In the Bible, Bozrah is sometimes

mentioned as a strong, fortified city, known for its pastoral activities, particularly sheep herding. The name "Bozrah" itself means "fortress" or "sheepfold," suggesting a place of security and protection.

Just as Bozrah was a place known for shepherding and keeping flocks secure, God promises to gather the remnant of Israel as a shepherd gathers his sheep. The reference to Bozrah emphasizes the protective and caring role of God as a shepherd who will bring His people together and keep them safe. God's Word goes on to say, "as a flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." God loves it when we live together in unity when we are united in Him. Psalm 133:1 (KJV) says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

When we are united, it is easier to speak in one voice than when we are divided or when we are in isolation. When we would go to social events with my friend Emmanuel Baraka, it was so easy to refuse to take alcohol because neither of us drank alcohol. Some people are not able to resist temptations because they do not have people around them who can help them resist. This should not be an excuse to indulge in sin. We are to depend on the infinite power of God to resist all temptations.

It does much good when we join with others who have a firm resolve to obey God. Normally, it is not easy to find many strong people of faith in one place. They have been dispersed in various places. God might have set it like that so that they can be a light to various people from diverse locations. A time will come when God brings them together. God has a way of bringing together those He wants to bring together. It is God's power that unites because it is the love of God that sets a solid rock foundation that holds the spirit of unity.

Calling for True Worship and Justice

Micah 6:8 (KJ21) - "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

God is the one who tells us and shows us what is good because He is the One who sets the rules. We have no power or authority to set our own rules for what is righteous and evil. God has given

us rules, He expects us to obey those rules, and He expects us to depend on Him in obeying those rules. God expects us to be just because He is just.

Speaking on justice, Ellen G. White writes, "It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example (The Great Controversy, Page 598)." - She also says, "The way of the Lord is to minister, to do deeds of love and mercy, and true justice (The Ministry of Healing, Page 352)."

God expects us to forgive because He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). Speaking of mercy, Ellen G. White writes, "God's love and mercy are ever interwoven with His justice. The Law, in its claims, has no power to pardon the transgressor; but in the work of Christ, mercy meets justice and cancels the sentence of the lawbreaker (The Desire of Ages, Page 762)." "The tender mercies of God are extended to us, not to encourage sin, but to inspire us with hope and lead us to faith and repentance (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, Page 630)."

God expects us to be humble because He is the humblest being in the universe (Philippians 2:8-11). Commenting on humility, Ellen G. White writes, "Humility and self-denial will find abundant reward in the kingdom of God. Those who have borne the cross, who have carried the burden, who have struggled to know and do the will of God, will hear the words of approval and commendation from Jesus (The Desire of Ages, Page 443)." "Humility is the only safeguard against self-deception (Christ's Object Lessons, Page 154)."

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Prophecy For the Church in the Future

Micah 4:1-2 (KJ21) - "[1] But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. [2] And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Prophet Micah prophesied that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills. When that happens, people will flow to it. Many nations will go there to worship God who will teach them the way and they will follow the way that God is leading them on.

When the Prophet Micah talks of mountains, He does not really mean literal mountains. He means the church. He is saying that the church of God which has the true doctrines of God will rise and be established above all the other churches that are following erroneous doctrines. Churches here are compared to mountains. The other mountains which are not God's mountain, are referred to as mountains because they have been teaching people lies for ages and have 'succeeded' in deception.

Error can never win over truth. Truth (which is God's mountain) will be established on top of the other mountains. John 12:32 (KJ21) - “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” John 14:6 (KJ21) - "Jesus saith unto him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.'"

Jesus is the truth. When Jesus is lifted, the truth is lifted, and all people will be drawn unto Him. Truth uplifts and attracts and when it attracts it forms a strong bond that the person who is bound to it will not want to let it go. Many nations will go to the true church. Not only will they do that, but they will also preach God's gospel and obey His commandments.

How do you validate if a church is true or false? This is what forms the true church:

Obedience to God's Commandments

Revelation 14:12 (KJ21) - "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

All ten commandments need to be upheld and preached including the Sabbath commandment. The Seventh day (Saturday) is the Sabbath (Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 16:23, Exodus 20:8-11, Exodus 31:15, Exodus 35:2, Leviticus 23:3, Numbers 15:32-36, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Isaiah 56:2, Isaiah 58:13). Churches that keep Sunday (the first day of the week) as the Sabbath (or any other day) may be the majority in the Christian community but as hard as this may sound, they are wrong.

This does not mean everyone worshiping in those churches will go to hell. There are many good, truth-seeking people there.

However, when God gives a person who does not know the true Sabbath day the knowledge and conviction concerning the true Sabbath and they rebelliously choose not to obey it, they are headed for destruction. James 4:17 (KJV) - "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Those who do not know and have no way of knowing are safe. Those who know but choose not to obey it are doomed.

Foundation on Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJ21) - "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The foundation for the true church must be Jesus Christ. There are many religions and denominations that do not have Jesus Christ as their foundation. They seem to follow the teachings of the Old Testament and disregard the new because they do not want to follow Jesus. What they don't know is. The Lord of the Old Testament (Jesus) is also the Lord of the New Testament. Others follow many good practices of the Bible, but they have formed their own Messiah.

Other churches do not know what it means to believe in Jesus. They disregard God's law stating that they have based their beliefs on Jesus. Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). Jesus is the Word (John 1:1, John 1:14). You cannot say you believe in Jesus, and you don't believe in His Word.

Unity in the Spirit

Ephesians 4:4-6 (KJ21) - "[4] There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The Holy Spirit unites us as believers. He has given us various gifts which He would want us to utilize in harmony with one another. We are all members of one body. Therefore, there should be no hatred or discord among us.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

John 4:23 (KJ21) - "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

The true church should worship God in spirit and in truth. Some churches disregard worshiping God in truth, stating that they are worshiping Him in the Spirit. What they do not understand is that God's Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17, John 15:26, John 16:13).

Love for One Another

John 13:35 (KJ21) - "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples: if ye have love one for another."

The test of true discipleship is love for one another.

Holiness and Purity

Ephesians 5:26-27 (KJ21) -"[26] That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, [27] that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

It is the Word of God that sanctifies. Therefore, the true church should do everything according to God's Word.

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Proclaiming the Coming Messiah

Micah 5:2 (KJ21) - “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

Prophet Micah prophesied about the first coming of Jesus. He prophesied that the leader of the Jews will come from Bethlehem. The name "Bethlehem" (בֵּית לֶחֶם, Beth Lehem) is of Hebrew origin. "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread." The name reflects the town’s agricultural background, as it was a place known for its fertile land and grain production.

Bethlehem is a small but historically significant town located in the hill country of Judah, about six miles south of Jerusalem. Despite its modest size, Bethlehem plays a crucial role in biblical history, particularly in relation to the lineage of King David and the birth of Jesus Christ. Bethlehem is sometimes referred to as "Bethlehem Ephratah" to distinguish it from another town named Bethlehem in the territory of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15). "Ephratah" is an ancient name for the region around Bethlehem and is associated with the clan or district from which Bethlehem came.

The Bible first mentions Bethlehem in connection with the death and burial of Rachel, Jacob’s beloved wife. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). Bethlehem is also the setting for the story of Ruth and Boaz, a significant narrative in the Old Testament. Ruth, a Moabite woman, returned to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law Naomi, and there she met Boaz, who would become her kinsman-redeemer and spouse. Ruth and Boaz are the great-grandparents of King David (Ruth 4:11-22).

Bethlehem is most famous in the Old Testament as the birthplace of King David, the second monarch of Israel and a central figure in biblical history. David was born in Bethlehem, where he was anointed by the prophet Samuel as the future king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Because of its association with David, Bethlehem came to be known as the "City of David."

Bethlehem was a small town. Jesus was not going to come from the biggest cities of those days. He was to come from a small, unpopular town called Bethlehem. Prophet Micah implies that the One coming will not be a normal leader, He will be God. We see that when Micah says, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is the only one who reigns from everlasting to everlasting. Some people think that Jesus had a beginning because He was born by Mary. Jesus has no beginning. He was there before the beginning. Prophet Micah, together with other prophets of the Old Testament, prophesied the first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They delivered God's message faithfully.

Trusting in God

Micah 7:5-7 (KJ21) - "[5] Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. [6] For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: a man's enemies are the men of his own house. [7] Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

Micah advises us not to trust in men. He talks of the danger of trusting in close relations. Thus, the prophet tells us not to trust in a friend, or an earthly guide. He tells men to guard their mouths from their lovers. The people he is talking about here are those who we put in our small circles. The ones who we confide in because of the confidence we have in them. Human beings cannot be trusted because they are not like God who does not lie (Numbers 23:19).

Someone can promise you that once you tell them your secret, they will not tell anyone. That person you have shared your secret with may face a situation which compels them to tell another person that secret that you have told them. The Bible says, "A talebearer revealeth secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter (Proverbs 11:13, KJ21)" Someone may be engaging in a sweet story and end up revealing the secret you have shared with them.

We put more trust in our close relations more than God. People put their friends' advice above God's advice. We place the advice of our loved ones above God's counsel. When we follow other people's advice and fail, we should not go back to God to question Him because we did not follow His advice from the beginning.

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Acknowledging God's Forgiveness and Mercy

Micah 7:18-19 (KJ21) - "[18] Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy. [19] He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Sin – The Hebrew word for sin is **"חטא" (chata)**. It generally means to miss the mark or to fail in following God's commands. It implies a mistake or failure to live up to God's standard, often seen as an error or shortcoming. Sin is often seen as a general term for any failure to live according to God's standards, whether intentional or not.

Iniquity – The Hebrew word for iniquity is **"עוון" (avon)**. It refers to a more deliberate act of wrongdoing, often associated with a moral or ethical distortion. Iniquity suggests a more entrenched or habitual practice of wrongdoing and a deep-seated inclination towards sin. Iniquity indicates a deeper, more ingrained nature of wrongdoing, suggesting a pattern of sinful behavior that distorts one's character.

Transgression – The Hebrew word for transgression is **"פשע" (pasha)**. This term implies a rebellion or a willful violation of God's law. It is used to denote a conscious and deliberate act of defiance against God's commands. Transgression denotes a willful breach of God's law, emphasizing a rebellious attitude and deliberate disobedience.

Iniquity refers to transgression that has matured. There are people who have deliberately chosen to live in rebellion to God's commandments. A Swahili saying goes, "Haskii la mwadhini wala la mteka maji msikitini." Translated it means, "He does not heed the call of the muezzin (caller to prayer) or the one who fetches water in the mosque." This saying is used to illustrate those who do not heed instructions from anyone in society, whether the high or the low. This saying metaphorically conveys someone who is deeply immersed in their own wrongdoing or rebellion

Those who live in iniquity are those who have willfully chosen to transgress God's law. They do not want to change at all. They sin knowingly and they are comfortable in their sins, having no sorrow for sin and showing no remorse whatsoever. As a human being, one will easily be annoyed when they meet such people. That is why Micah is asking, "Who is a god like God?" God is One

who not only forgives sins and transgressions, but He also pardons iniquity. He gives a chance to those who are living in iniquity to repent.

God does not keep His anger for long because He delights in mercy. God finds pleasure in forgiving people. Many of us Christians forgive to fulfill a requirement from the Bible, but we do not delight in forgiving. God is happy when He forgives. He has compassion for us, and He subdues our iniquities.

The word subdue in Hebrew means to trample on or to conquer. God tramples upon our iniquities. God conquers our iniquities. It does not matter how long one has been living in iniquity, God will work in that person to conquer that iniquity. God casts away our sins into the depths of the sea, meaning He forgets them completely.

Proclaiming God's Retribution and Deliverance

Micah 7:9-10 (KJ21) - "[9] I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness. [10] Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said unto me, "Where is the Lord thy God?" Mine eyes shall behold her; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets."

Prophet Micah says that he will bear the wrath (indignation) of God because he has sinned against Him. We enjoy transgressing God's law, but we do not want Him to punish us because nobody enjoys punishments. We should know that each sin has a consequence. So, when you welcome sin, be sure to welcome the consequences.

Sin makes God angry. When you invite sin into your life, you are inviting the wrath of God into your life. Thus, you should be willing to bear all that comes with His wrath. The good thing is that God uses punishments to refine and define you. It is an act of faith to allow God to work on you like Prophet Micah did.

It is like the shaping of a piece of sculpture. If that sculpture was alive, it would feel excruciating pain when it goes through processes such as heating, being cut etc. However, the end result will

be magnificent. Micah is assured that when God has pleaded his case, and executed judgment for him, God will bring him to the light, and he will behold God's righteousness.

I remember in school when people would get punished, other people would laugh at them. There are certain people who are always laughing at you when you are undergoing pain and when God is punishing you. They form all sorts of gossip about you. Do not mind them. When God is done with refining and defining you, they will be ashamed.

The process that God has taken you through will bring out the best out of you, putting you on a standard that is incomprehensibly high as heaven is from earth. He will give you innumerable blessings as the stars of the sky in multitude. Those who thought that God has left you will surely see that God is with you.

Trust in God's Provision

Micah 4:4-7 (KJ21) - "[4] But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. [5] For all people will walk everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. [6] "In that day," saith the Lord, "will I assemble her that is halt, and I will gather her that is driven out and her that I have afflicted. [7] And I will make her that is halt a remnant, and her

that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from hence forth, even forever."

Micah 4:4 paints a picture of peace and prosperity. The imagery of sitting under one's vine and fig tree is a symbol of personal security, contentment, and blessing. In ancient Israel, owning a vine and fig tree was a sign of stability and well-being. The promise that "none shall make them afraid" indicates a time when external threats and fears will be absent, and people will live in safety. The assurance that this will come to pass is strengthened by the declaration that "the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it," emphasizing the certainty of God's promise.

Micah 4:5 contrasts the nations who follow their own gods with the people of Israel who are committed to following the Lord. It acknowledges the reality that different nations worship different deities, but it emphasizes the enduring faithfulness of God's people to Him. The phrase "we will walk in the name of the Lord our God" implies a life of obedience, devotion, and reliance on God's guidance. The addition of "for ever and ever" underscores the eternal nature of this commitment, suggesting that God's people will stay faithful to Him throughout all time.

In Micah 4:6 God speaks of a future day when He will gather those who have been marginalized, afflicted, and scattered. The term "her that is halt" refers to those who are weak or lame, symbolizing those who have been wounded or disadvantaged. "Her that is driven out" speaks of those who have been exiled or cast away. "Her that I have afflicted" acknowledges that some of the suffering has come as a result of God's judgment. However, this verse is about restoration—God will bring these individuals back together, showing His mercy and care for those who have suffered.

In Micah 4:7, the promise of restoration is completed with a transformation. The weak ("her that is halt") will become a "remnant," a term often used in the Bible to describe a faithful group that remains after a time of judgment or calamity. This remnant will be made into "a strong nation," indicating a reversal of their previous state of weakness or insignificance.

The verse ends with the declaration that the Lord will reign over them from Mount Zion, a reference to God's eternal rule from Jerusalem. The phrase "from hence forth, even forever" reaffirms the permanence of God's kingdom and His unending reign over His people.

Condemning False Leaders and Emphasizing Righteous Leadership

Micah 3:10-12 (AMP) - "[10] Who build Zion with blood [and extortion and murder] And Jerusalem with violent injustice. [11] Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests teach for a fee, And her prophets foretell for money; Yet they lean on the Lord, saying, “Is not the Lord among us? No tragedy or distress will come on us.” [12] Therefore, on account of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the house [of the Lord] shall become like a densely wooded hill."

Prophet Micah condemns unrighteous leadership in the state (judges) and in the church (priests and prophets). He condemns corruption which is portrayed in acts of bribery. He also condemns trading the Word of God and using the gift of prophecy for business. Judgment should be based on justice and fairness and not in favor of the party offering the most money. Matthew 10:8 (KJ21) - "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

God has given you His Word for free, why sell it exorbitantly? Why should you use your spiritual gifts like the gift of prophecy to extort people? The issues in Micah's time are common in this modern age and they are limiting the spread of the gospel since some spiritual leaders have made themselves to be accessed only by a chosen few.

There is no problem when someone chooses to appreciate you after you have ministered to them. There is no problem when you open a business selling Godly materials like Godly books. The problem is selling your services and products exorbitantly that it limits you from being a blessing to more people.

You should not make money your focus when doing ministry. When you make money as your focus, you are going to do the bare minimum as your concentration will be on what you get, not what you give. When you focus on what you get, you will easily get tired of giving. That is why most employees hate their jobs because their focus is on what they are gaining.

Some people of God think the Lord is on their side since they are making money from exorbitantly selling the Word of God. Prophet Micah tells such people that they shall be plowed like a field, and they will become a heap of ruins. God wants you to do business, but He does not want you to extort people. God does not want you to depend on the arm of flesh to enrich you, He wants you to acknowledge that it is Him who brings the increase.

In conclusion, the faith of the prophet Micah serves as a profound reminder of God's justice, mercy, and the ultimate hope of restoration. Micah's ministry, marked by unwavering dedication to God's truth amidst societal corruption, demonstrates the essence of the faith celebrated in Hebrews 11. His prophecies not only warned of impending judgment but also pointed toward a future where God's righteousness would prevail, exemplified in the coming of the Messiah from Bethlehem.

Micah's trust in God's promises, despite the dire circumstances of his time, challenges us to embrace integrity, seek justice, and live with the anticipation of God's ultimate redemption. As we reflect on Micah's faith, let us be inspired to uphold righteousness, cherish the mercy of God, and remain steadfast in our hope for the fulfillment of His promises, knowing that our faith, like Micah's, anchors us in the unchanging character of our divine Lord.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I thank You for enriching me with Your richest blessings. I thank You for giving me access to Your Word. I thank You for forgiving me all the times that I have sinned against you. Please help me to worship You in Truth and in Spirit. Reveal to me what the true church is and lead me to it if I'm not in it. Thank you for sending Your son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins. Help my unbelief and help me to trust in You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. What have you learned when reading the faith of Prophet Micah?
2. What can you do as an individual to ensure that you foster unity in your church? Write down some of the solutions you have come up with. Pray for God to help you activate those solutions.
3. Pray for God to forgive you the sins you have committed and believe that He has forgiven you.
4. Ask God to deliver you from the sin or addiction that you are struggling with.
5. Are you faithful to God even when no one is watching? Ask God to help you overcome your secret sins.
6. Keep a journal of answered prayers. Write down all the things you are praying for in this activity and keep on praying for them. Cancel out the one that God has already answered and thank God for it.

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CHAPTER 77

FAITH LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF PROPHET NAHUM

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"Comfort, comfort," Nahum cried,

But not for those in sin who hide,

For those who heed the call of grace,

Will find in God a resting place.

Yet for the wicked, swift their fall,

As Nineveh crumbled, one and all,

No fortress strong could stand the test,

When God's hand brought down the world's best.

"The Lord is good," his voice proclaimed,

A star so bright, holy fire untamed,

In troubled times, He is our stay,

To guide us through the darkest day.

The Gospel speaks peace, rest, joy, and fun,

When sorrow's reign would be long gone and done,

No longer would affliction reign,

God's mighty hand would break the chain.

So let us heed God's loud cry,

And turn from sin, lest we should die,

For in God’s Book, we find the key,

To life, to hope, to victory.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

The History of Nahum

The name Nahum holds a profound meaning, it means comfort. As a native or descendant of Elkosh, he is aptly referred to as the Elkoshite in Nahum 1:1. However, the exact whereabouts of Elkosh remain shrouded in mystery, sparking lively debates among scholars. Some theories place Elkosh in the serene landscapes of Galilee, while others venture to suggest locations nestled within Assyria or beyond.

The uncertainty surrounding Elkosh's identity only adds to the enigmatic aura surrounding the Elkoshites. They emerge from the shadows of history primarily through their association with Nahum and his prophetic writings in the Old Testament.

Background of the Book of Nahum

The Book of Nahum stands out among the scrolls of the Hebrew Bible, finding its place within the collection known as the Twelve Minor Prophets. With only three succinct chapters, it packs a powerful punch, all thanks to the prophet Nahum's penmanship. Dive into its pages, and you will find yourself embroiled in a tale of divine retribution aimed squarely at the grand city of Nineveh, the jewel of the Assyrian Empire.

Picture this: the seventh century BCE, a time when the Assyrian Empire reigned supreme, flexing its muscles across the ancient world. From Israel's northern borders to the gates of Judah, they held sway, and were feared for their ruthlessness and military might. But along came Nahum, a voice in the wilderness, heralding a message of reckoning from God. The Book of Nahum paints a vivid

picture of God's justice, a force to be reckoned with. No longer would the Assyrians oppress and terrorize; their time was up.

And lo and behold, history tells us Nahum was not just spinning tales. Around 612 BCE, like clockwork, the Babylonians and Medes swooped in, besieging Nineveh until its walls crumbled and its power vanished into the annals of time. Nahum's book is a testament to the enduring power of righteousness, a reminder that even the mightiest empires crumble when they stray from the path of virtue.

Now, you might be wondering about Nahum himself. The Book of Nahum does not provide many details about his personal life. Instead, he delivers divine messages of hope and judgment aimed at the Assyrians and, by extension, all who neglect the law of God. So, the next time you open the Book of Nahum, remember it is not just a dusty old tome. It is a vibrant saga of justice, redemption, and the unyielding power of faith.

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The Burden of Nahum

Nahum 1:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. [2] God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. [3] The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. [4] He rebuketh the sea, and

maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth."

God showed Prophet Nahum a vision, and that vision became a burden to him. God has spoken to some of us using various means of what He intends us to do. Unfortunately, some have neglected His voice. We have acted like stones inside a pipe that blocks water from flowing or like a lock that shuts a door to prevent people from entering.

When God gives us a command to do something, we need to take that command as a burden. When God gives you a business idea, take that idea as a burden. This is because only when you take it as a burden will you try your best to offload it from your shoulders. It is a deed of faith to take God's instructions as a burden, and it is an act of faith to work on God's instructions.

The Assyrians were enemies of the Israelites. God gave Prophet Nahum a difficult message to preach to them. Preaching that message was a burden. Nahum risked his life by faithfully communicating it. This clearly shows that Nahum esteemed the lives of the Assyrians higher than his own life. He esteemed God's work as more important than his life. Nahum emphasized that God is a jealous God. We find this attribute of the jealousy of God when we read the second commandment in Exodus 20:4-6, where He instructs us not to make and worship other gods besides Him. God wants us to put Him first because He always puts us first.

1 John 4:19 (KJV) – "We love Him because He first loved us." God loves us so much that He did not spare His only begotten son. Therefore, it is an act of injustice to Him when we fail to put Him first. The Bible tells us in Nahum 1:2 that God has anger and that He avenges and will take vengeance against His enemies. The Bible says in Micah 7:18 (KJV) – "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever because He delighteth in mercy." Micah tells us that God delights in mercy and He pardons iniquity. Nahum tells us that God has wrath and He avenges His foes.

The books of Nahum and Micah are both in one Bible. Does the Bible conflict with itself by having these two books combined to form the Biblical canon? Are these two statements conflicting? God is indeed a God of mercy, as Micah 7:18 tells us. When God sent Prophet Jonah to speak to the people of Nineveh, telling them what they had done and how God intended to punish them, it was

an act of mercy. It was an act of mercy because God did not punish them without telling them their wrongdoings.

There are people whom you may be hurting that will not tell you what they are planning to do to you. They may be quiet, and you may think that they are stupid, but one day they end up surprising you by doing something to you that you had not anticipated. God is not like that. He does not delight in catching us by surprise, especially when it is time to punish us.

God is generous in giving us chances. Many of us would agree that God gave them more than two chances when they did something wrong. Often when God gives us a punishment, and we realize that we are still alive even after that punishment, we ought to know that we are alive because He has given us another chance.

When God gave the people of Nineveh a warning through Jonah, He was giving them a chance to repent of their transgressions. Fortunately, at that time, they repented, and God pardoned them. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that when God sent Prophet Nahum to tell them how He intended to destroy them because of their iniquity, He gave them a chance to repent. In soccer, when the referee gives you a yellow card, he is giving you a chance to abide by the rules of the game. At work, when your boss gives you a warning letter, he is giving you a chance to behave properly.

In school, when the administration gives you a punishment but still retains you in school, they are giving you a chance to change your ways. When they give you a suspension letter to go home for a few days, they are giving you a chance to correct your mistakes and be a good student. It reaches a point in a soccer game where the referee issues someone with a red card, meaning they are ejected from that game. A time comes when a boss fires someone, meaning they cannot go back to that work again.

It reaches a point when one gets expelled from school, meaning that they cannot go back to that school. God has more mercy than the referees, the bosses at work, and the school principal. Before God destroys someone, He has already given that person various warnings, and various mild punishments. If that person persists in sin, He gives them more severe punishments, whereby the latter punishment is greater than the former. Therefore, when God had reached a point of wanting to destroy Nineveh, He had done all He could to save them.

He had run out of options, and the only choice left was to destroy them. However, God in His mercy, before destroying them, gave them an option to make amends with Him. Thus, He sent Prophet Nahum to warn them. The Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). It also says that God never changes (Malachi 3:6). This means that if God forgave the Assyrians during the era of Jonah after they confessed and repented, He would have forgiven them too in the era of Nahum if they had repented.

Confessing your sins is an act of faith. Repentance is an act of faith. Stopping sin is an act of faith, and doing the right thing according to God's commandments is an act of faith. Faith pleases God, and He rewards those who please Him with their faithful actions (Hebrews 11:6).

Slow to Anger but Great in Power

Nahum 1:3 tells us that God is slow to anger but great in power. One of the attributes of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is longsuffering, which is also known as patience (Galatians 5:22). God expects us to have the fruit of the Holy Ghost. The attribute of God known as longsuffering means that God is willing to suffer for a long time, bearing our transgressions while we live in comfort.

God hates sin, but He does not hate us. It is a grievous burden on His shoulders when we persist in sin. However, God is willing to bear that burden to give us a chance to turn to Him. God does not abuse His power like many of us do. For example, some top officials in an organization or a jurisdiction will abuse their authority by oppressing people and committing acts of injustice. Some handsome men and some beautiful ladies will abuse their power of being physically attractive by engaging in infidelity and by taking wrongful advantage of their partners. God is humble in His omnipotence.

"In the time of its temporal prosperity Nineveh was a center of crime and wickedness. Inspiration has characterized it as "the bloody city, ... full of lies and robbery." In figurative language the prophet Nahum compared the Ninevites to a cruel, ravenous lion. "Upon whom," he inquired, "hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" Nahum 3:1, 19." - Prophets and Kings, Page 265.2, Ellen G. White.

“Yet Nineveh, wicked though it had become, was not wholly given over to evil. He who “beholdeth all the sons of men” (Psalm 33:13) and “seeth every precious thing” (Job 28:10) perceived in that city many who were reaching out after something better and higher, and who, if granted opportunity to learn of the living God, would put away their evil deeds and worship Him. And so in His wisdom God revealed Himself to them in an unmistakable manner, to lead them, if possible, to repentance.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 265.3, Ellen G. White.

Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. It would be an act of justice if God were to immediately kill us after telling a white lie (what many consider a trivial or harmless lie) or having an evil thought. God has the power to do that, but He does not. He does not abuse His power. He even extends mercy over justice, even when it would be fair for Him to destroy us.

A Stronghold in the Day of Trouble

Nahum 1:7 (KJV) – “The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.”

While on this earth, we are not assured of a trouble-free world because we are in a world clouded by sin. However, we are assured that we can hold onto God whenever we face adversities. Refusing to give up when faced with challenges and holding onto God is done by faith. Without faith, one can give up whenever they meet opposing mighty waves.

God knows those who trust in Him. He knows those who live by faith. Does that mean He does not know those who do not trust in Him? Not at all. God knows everybody. However, He bestows special favor on those who trust Him to encourage them to trust Him more and to encourage other people to trust in Him. Those who, by trusting in God, cling to Him in the day of trouble will be steadfast and upright and will walk surely.

Picture this: life, with all its difficulties, can often feel like navigating stormy seas on a rollercoaster ride. But in these moments of uncertainty and fear, Nahum 1:7 stands out as an inspiration, offering comfort and reassurance amidst life's tempests.

Imagine having a solid refuge to turn to when life's toughest challenges come knocking. It's not just any refuge; it's the embrace of a loving Creator who remains steadfast in the face of adversity. He's not distant or detached; He's right there beside us, ready to offer His unwavering support.

But Nahum 1:7 goes beyond mere promises of protection; it's a reminder that God knows us intimately, like a trusted friend who understands our deepest fears and hopes. He sees the faith we hold onto in tough times and treasures it like a precious gem. And here's the remarkable part: when we rely on God's strength, something incredible happens. Our faith becomes a guiding star for others, illuminating the darkness that often surrounds us. It's like we're part of a beautiful chain reaction of love and support, spreading hope wherever we go.

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An End to Affliction

Nahum 1:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] But with an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies. [9] What do ye imagine against the LORD? He will make an utter end: affliction will not rise up the second time."

Those who despise trusting in God and who choose to live in sin for their entire lives will be destroyed in the end. God will not do that because He is harsh, but He will do that because He has given them incalculable chances to turn to Him, but they have chosen not to.

Lack of faith has caused so much trouble in this world. Most of the afflictions we face would be reduced if more people had faith. Lack of faith is not only common among people in the world; it is also common among Christians in the church. It is quite unfortunate that some religions show more faith in the god they are worshiping than Christians do.

Faith in the living God brings us closer to God and makes us friends with God. Lack of faith pulls us away from God. For example, when God sends you on a mission and you obey immediately despite the obstacles at hand, you will encounter miraculous experiences as you embark on that journey. Thus, you will be more encouraged to obey God the next time He sends you, and you will be drawn closer to Him.

On the other hand, when God sends you on a mission and you fail to go because of the obstacles on the way, you will not encounter any incredible interventions from Him because you have placed the obstacles above His Word. As a result, you will pull far away from God. When you draw closer to God, you will act in righteousness. Pulling away from God will cause you to boldly walk the paths of sin.

When Nahum says God will bring an end to all His enemies and affliction will not rise a second time, he means that God will bring an end to all those people who lack faith. Doubt makes one an enemy of God. All who doubt God's Word will be destroyed because doubting God's Word is what leads to sin. For example, your boss tells you to attend a meeting on Sabbath and you obey him because you fear losing your job. You have placed the fear of losing your job above God's Word.

A school meeting for your child is happening on Saturday and you attend because you are afraid to miss out on important discussions. Attending that meeting means that you have placed the fear of missing out on important discussions above God's Word. These events may seem innocent, but 'smaller' sins usually open doors to more sinful living and evil. Slight disobedience of God's Word leads to more adversities. A time will come when God puts an end to all this, and affliction will not rise a second time.

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Devoured as Stubble Fully Dry

Nahum 1:10 (KJV) – “For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.”

The verse reads, "For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they will be devoured as stubble fully dry." This passage from the book of Nahum is part of a larger context where the prophet delivers a message of judgment against Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. The imagery used in this verse vividly captures the impending fate of a people entwined like thorns and facing imminent destruction due to their intoxication with sin.

The metaphor of being "folden together as thorns" suggests a unity forged by negative forces. Thorns, often symbolizing adversity or the consequences of sin, portray the people of Nineveh entangled in a collective existence marked by strife and moral decay. This entanglement implies the inseparable link between their sinful actions and the inevitable consequences they face.

The reference to being "drunken as drunkards" adds another layer to the prophetic imagery. Beyond its literal meaning, intoxication metaphorically conveys spiritual stupor or moral blindness. The people of Nineveh are portrayed as inebriated with their own excesses, perhaps alluding to their arrogance, pride, and indulgence in wickedness. This spiritual drunkenness serves as a precursor to their impending downfall.

The concluding phrase, "they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry," paints a picture of the thorough and consuming nature of divine judgment awaiting them. Stubble, being dry and combustible, is quickly consumed in fire. The metaphor underscores the inevitability and completeness of the divine retribution that will engulf the sinful city. The use of "fully dry" emphasizes Nineveh's readiness for divine judgment, highlighting the severity of their transgressions.

Nahum 1:10 employs powerful and evocative imagery to convey the consequences of a nation's collective wrongdoing. It serves as a reminder of biblical themes of divine justice, accountability, and the inescapable outcomes of a society entangled in sin. The verse echoes the broader biblical message emphasizing righteousness, humility, and adherence to God's ways to avoid the destructive consequences of wayward living.

I will Afflict Thee No More

Nahum 1:11-12 (KJV) – "[11] There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor. [12] Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when He shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more."

"Though they be quiet, and likewise many." No number of angels, human beings, or animals can overpower God. God is stronger than the strongest forces combined. Various people are more empowered when they are part of a group. Sometimes this leads to great achievements because the spirit of teamwork strengthens the team. However, not all instances of people coming together unite for good. Some unite for evil, embracing a crowd mentality to harm others and themselves.

For example, students who come together to burn a school or attack the administration usually feel encouraged due to being part of a crowd. They believe outnumbering the administration will grant them power. Often, they overpower them as the administration consists of fellow human beings. Unity can make people achieve remarkable things; it can also lead to great destruction. Those building the Tower of Babel were united for evil, leading to their plans' downfall. Despite their multitude, Nahum asserts that they will be cut down.

In the sacred verses of Nahum, nestled amidst the prophetic warnings and divine judgment, there emerges a profound promise: "I will afflict thee no more" (Nahum 1:12). These words, like a guiding light amidst the darkness, offer solace to the weary soul.

Imagine a weary traveler, lost in the wilderness, battered by the elements, and on the brink of despair. In that moment of desperation, a guiding light appears on the horizon—a promise of safety and shelter from the raging storm. Similarly, "I will afflict thee no more" serves as a guiding light for those navigating the tumultuous waters of life's trials and tribulations.

Consider the story of Job, who endured unimaginable suffering and loss, yet clung to his faith with unwavering determination. In the depths of his despair, he cried out to the heavens, seeking solace and understanding. And in response, God offered him words of comfort and restoration, promising

to afflict him no more. Just as Job found hope amid his suffering, so too can we find solace in the promise of divine intervention.

Think of the prodigal son, who wandered far from home, only to find himself broken and destitute in a foreign land. Despite his waywardness, his father welcomed him back with open arms, offering forgiveness and redemption. Likewise, "I will afflict thee no more" embodies the unconditional love and grace of a Heavenly Father, ready to embrace us in our darkest hour and lead us back to the path of righteousness.

In our own lives, we may meet trials that test our faith and shake us to the core. It may be the loss of a loved one, the collapse of a dream, or the weight of unrelenting adversity. Yet, amid our suffering, we can find comfort in the promise that God will afflict us no more. It is a reminder that our pain is temporary, that joy comes in the morning, and that there is always hope on the horizon.

So, let us hold fast to this promise, like a lifeline in the storm, and trust in the unwavering faithfulness of our Creator. For in His hands, our afflictions will be lifted, our wounds healed, and our souls restored to wholeness once more.

An End to the Prosperity of the Wicked

Nahum 1:14 (KJV) - “And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.”

Through Nahum, God conveyed to the Assyrians His intention to end their prosperity and dismantle their false idols. Here, God admonishes them for their transgression of worshiping other gods alongside Him. If the Assyrians possessed wisdom, they would have taken this warning

seriously, forsaking their idols before facing divine retribution. Such an act of repentance could have led to divine pardon and averted their impending punishment.

Myron Golden, in essence, defines wisdom as the application of (obeying) God's Word. He advocates for immediate action upon receiving instructions from the Scriptures, whether it involves fulfilling a command or abstaining from sinful behavior. Hence, it behooves us to exercise discernment when discerning divine guidance, heeding it promptly and with diligence.

Hearken Diligently to God’s Voice

The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 28:1 to hearken diligently unto God's voice. The keyword is diligently. Diligently means that we are listening to every whisper, every idea, every hint, and every suggestion that comes from God. This is because God's voice is not always loud. God can send small punishments to you for you to walk on the right path. When He does that, it can be likened to whispering. If you ignore, He will louden His voice so that you hear. We shouldn't wait for God to amplify His voice because augmenting His voice can mean more severe punishments.

God can send someone to give you a suggestion to do something that is in line with His commandments. For example, someone can come and suggest to you to be an usher in church. Typically, if you carefully consider the Godly suggestions that people give you, they are suggestions that are in line with your talents, skills, and abilities. Sometimes we may have a gift in a certain field that we don't know about. These suggestions may be opportunities to discover that gift. Sometimes these suggestions may be keys in disguise to unlock what we have been praying for.

For example, a certain lady from church called Christa suggested to me to join the church choir. She did not know that I could sing, the suggestion was random. Luckily, at the time she made that suggestion, I had learnt to listen to God's voice. As much as I did not want to join the church choir, I realized that I have the singing ability and God needed me to join the choir to make effective use of my singing skills. So, without hesitation, I joined immediately because I understood that it was the voice of God through her. Years before, people had been telling me to join the choir, but I was neglecting and rejecting because I was not acquainted with God’s voice.

One week before Christa suggested that I join the choir, two friends namely Nikita and Joan asked me if I could volunteer to teach children in the Vocational Bible Study that ran for one week. I did not want to agree because I thought the work of staying with children and teaching them was meant for women and not men (as most men think). However, I realized that what they were telling me was in accordance with God's Word and there are no gender roles when serving God.

Everybody, both male and female, has a part to play in the body of Christ. Those thoughts were masquerading in my mind in microseconds. You who are reading this paragraph will take more time to read this than the thoughts took in my mind. In other words, what I'm saying is it didn't take more than one second before I said yes to their suggestion.

While in a meeting on conducting that one-week Vocational Bible Study, I met someone called Kahende who asked me if I could join the children's ministry permanently after we were done with that one week. I agreed even though I was not sure of what age I would like to teach. So, I joined the children's ministry, and I started at ages thirteen to fifteen. Afterward, I moved from age sixteen to eighteen.

A few months down the line, a friend called Vera sent me to preach a sermon to Airport View Seventh Day Adventist Church. That is when I realized that my public speaking skills had greatly improved. All this happened in the year 2022 (about a year before writing this).

In August 2023 (this year), the same Vera sent me to volunteer for a children's camp meeting at Syokimau Central Seventh Day Adventist Church and gave me the role of teaching kindergarten (children between the ages of three to five). I was amazed when I realized that through constant practice in the children's ministry, God had given me the ability to tutor children of that young age. What is testimonial about all these is that I had been praying to God to give me good public speaking skills for so long. I had joined the public speaking club in university, I had tried to join the Toast Masters club, and I had spoken to various public speaking gurus but all that did not amount to much.

My public speaking skills were cultivated in the children's ministry in church. All along, I knew I could write well but it was in my wildest dreams to ever imagine speaking publicly for more than 5 minutes. Now, it is common for me to preach thirty-minute to two-hour sermons and still maintain the audience's attention. How did I get there? By saying yes to Godly suggestions made to me. If I had said no, I would still be praying for God to give me public speaking skills.

Before I entered children's ministry, it was not fully clear in my mind that children's ministry was the best place to train communication skills. You might be praying for something for a long time, but you are not getting it because you are not diligently listening to what God is telling you. God can use anybody to speak to you. He doesn't have to use a pastor, prophet, or a member of the church.

Pastor Antony Mwangi said that one time he heard God's voice through a prostitute. He said that he had gone to a nightclub in the Central Business District of Nairobi, Kenya, to have fun when a prostitute came to him and asked him what a young handsome man like him was doing in that club. He said that he knew that was the voice of God through that lady and immediately he left that club and went away crying (probably feeling sorrowful about how he was sinking in sin).

God's voice is not just in people, it is also in animals and nature because God is in every living thing. When a robber steals, investigators can trace the person who perpetrated the robbery through the fingerprints they have left behind. Sometimes, they wear gloves so that they don't leave

fingerprints. No matter how hard they try, they will always leave a mark that will trace the crime back to them. God is not a robber, but this analogy is meant to state that God has left a mark in all His creation. Therefore, spending time in nature will give us various lessons about God.

In medical research, people have come up with cures that can cure various chronic illnesses by studying nature. The person who invented airplanes had people opposing him stating a scientific 'fact' that it is impossible for something denser than air to fly in the air. If those scientists had studied nature carefully, they would have realized that birds are denser than air and are still able to fly in the air.

When God told the people of Nineveh that He would destroy their graven and molten gods, they would have taken it as a hint that God was against them molding and worshiping other gods (Exodus 20:4-6). They should have acted fast on that hint and destroyed the idols they were worshipping. We should move fast when God gives us hints and suggestions before He amplifies His voice.

A Message of Judgment and a Message of Hope

Nahum 1:15 (KJV) – “Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.”

During Nahum's era, the Assyrians loomed as a menacing threat to the southern kingdom of Judah. The term "wicked" in Nahum 1:15 likely encompasses the Assyrians, known for their oppressive and ruthless conquests. Their history is rife with brutalizing the nations they conquered, including the Israelites, marked by violence, cruelty, and the forced displacement of people.

Nahum, fueled by faith, fervently delivered both a message of judgment and a message of hope. While hope was offered to the people of Judah, judgment awaited the wicked. The affliction inflicted by the wicked upon the people of Judah left them questioning why God permitted such prosperity among the oppressors.

At times, God permits the wicked to thrive to grant them a chance to repent. He may allow them to prosper to reveal His love and mercy, hoping they'll turn to Him. Sadly, many fail to recognize

this, attributing their success in business, career, popularity, or academics to their "intelligence" or hard work. Their pride swells, leading them deeper into sin until God's patience wears thin, and severe punishment follows.

Today, we face a dual message: one of judgment and one of hope. The message of judgment is directed at those who persist in sin, ignoring God's repeated calls for repentance. Those who revel in fleeting pleasures, forsaking the promise of eternal life, will ultimately face harsh consequences. Conversely, those who choose righteousness, persist in the fight against sin and hold onto hope are assured of eternal blessings awaiting them.

Restore your splendor and majesty

Nahum 2:1-2 (AMP) – "[1] The one who scatters has come up against you [Nineveh]. Man the fortress *and* ramparts, watch the road; Strengthen your back [prepare for battle], summon all your strength. **2** For the Lord will restore the splendor *and* majesty of Jacob Like the splendor of [ancient and united] Israel, Even though destroyers have destroyed them and ruined their vine branches."

The verse opens with a powerful proclamation: the Lord pledges to revive the glory and grandeur of Jacob. Here, "Jacob" symbolizes the entire nation of Israel, invoking imagery of collective restoration. This restoration mirrors the resplendence of ancient, united Israel, suggesting a return to a golden age of prosperity, harmony, and resilience—a time marked by unwavering fidelity to God's precepts.

Indeed, faith in God catalyzes restoration. No matter the extent of the devastation wrought by adversaries, God stands ready to renew those who return to Him. Moreover, His restoration isn't merely a patch-up job; it's a divine elevation. He not only restores but also elevates, ushering His faithful into heights of blessing previously unimagined.

In essence, this verse embodies a profound truth: with faith as our compass, restoration becomes not just a possibility but a promise—a promise of a triumphant return to abundance and divine favor.

Nahum 3:1-5 (KJV) – "**1** Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; **2** The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses,

and of the jumping chariots. **3** The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: **4** Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. **5** Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame."

The prophet Nahum vividly describes the moral corruption and impending downfall of the city of Nineveh. He portrays Nineveh as a city filled with bloodshed, deceit, and exploitation, where its leaders and inhabitants have turned away from righteousness and embraced wickedness. The once-glorious reputation of the city has been tarnished by its egregious sins and transgressions against God's commandments.

Nahum condemns Nineveh's rulers for their relentless pursuit of power and wealth at the expense of justice and morality. He accuses them of shedding innocent blood and engaging in deceitful practices to maintain their oppressive regime. The city's leaders are depicted as greedy and ruthless, exploiting their subjects for personal gain and indulging in acts of violence and exploitation without remorse.

Furthermore, Nahum highlights Nineveh's spiritual corruption, denouncing its inhabitants for their idolatry, witchcraft, and occult practices. The city has become a hotbed of spiritual depravity, where false gods are worshiped, and dark forces are invoked to gain power and influence. Despite God's warnings and calls to repentance, Nineveh remains obstinate in its rebellion, refusing to acknowledge its sins and turn back to the true path.

As a result of Nineveh's unrepentant wickedness, Nahum prophesies its imminent destruction and downfall. He foretells God's swift and decisive judgment upon the city, where its walls will be breached, and its defenses will crumble. The once-proud city will be reduced to ruins, its streets filled with lamentation and mourning as its inhabitants face the consequences of their sins.

Nahum's message serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of unrepentant sin and rebellion against God. It underscores the importance of righteousness and obedience to God's commandments, warning against the allure of worldly power and material wealth at the expense

of spiritual integrity. Ultimately, Nahum's prophecy serves as a call to repentance and a testament to God's justice and sovereignty over all nations.

God Does not Delight in Embarrassing Us

We ought to understand that God does not delight in embarrassing us. Instead, He takes pleasure in uplifting us and ensures that we are always the heads and not the tails. However, when we persistently embarrass Him, He may endure it for some time (even hundreds of years), but

eventually, He will surely embarrass us. When we uplift His name, He will uplift ours. Conversely, when we disgrace His name, He will disgrace ours as well.

You may be a genuine child of God experiencing financial struggles, yet God finds a way to cover you, creating a perception that you are doing well even if you are not. God placed the Israelites in the wilderness in isolation, where there would be minimal contact with other nations so that He could groom them to be fully equipped to enter the Promised Land.

Perhaps He placed them there to shield them from other nations seeing their destitution and mocking them while He continued to prepare them. Despite their weakness and inadequate military equipment, they conquered their way to the Promised Land. This is because God could not allow them to be embarrassed.

We need to strive to ensure that God's name is not embarrassed. When we see something wrong happening in our churches, we should refrain from spreading the negative news to others. As we pray for the wrongdoers and correct those whom we can, we should try to protect them and refrain from sharing details with uninvolved and uninterested parties. We should empathize and consider if we would appreciate the same done to us. By covering other people's faults, we can be assured that God will do His best to cover ours.

Genesis 9:20-27 (AMP) – "[20] And Noah began to farm *and* cultivate the ground and he planted a vineyard. [21] He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he was uncovered *and* lay exposed inside his tent. [22] Ham, the father of Canaan, saw [by accident] the nakedness of his father, and [to his father's shame] told his two brothers outside. [23] So Shem and Japheth took a robe and put it on both their shoulders, and walked backwards and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness. [24] When Noah awoke from his wine [induced stupor], he knew what his younger son [Ham] had done to him. [25] So he said, "Cursed be Canaan [the son of Ham]; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." [26] He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. [27] "May God enlarge [the land of] Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."

Noah's curse upon Ham, and the subsequent blessings bestowed upon Shem and Japheth, offer profound insights into human behavior and divine principles. It's a tale not just of familial discord, but a spiritual lesson echoing through the ages.

In the biblical narrative, Noah's vulnerability is exposed when Ham, his son, sees him naked and shares this discovery with his brothers, Shem, and Japheth. Ham's action, whether intentional or not, breach a sacred boundary of respect and privacy. It's not merely about the act of seeing but the subsequent dissemination of that information.

Interestingly, while Ham's gaze may have been the initial transgression, it's his choice to disclose it to others that seal his fate. He shares this knowledge with those closest to him, his brothers, in a moment of indiscretion or perhaps even malice.

Herein lies a timeless lesson: the danger of gossip, especially within the confines of our closest relationships. God's displeasure with Ham's actions speaks to the importance of discretion, loyalty, and empathy within familial bonds.

Moreover, the contrasting responses of Shem and Japheth highlight the virtues of honor and compassion. Rather than exploit their father's vulnerability, they choose to cover him, averting their gaze from his nakedness and shielding him from shame. Their actions reflect not only respect for their father but a deeper understanding of the sanctity of family and the value of dignity.

In today's context, the story of Noah's curse and blessing prompts reflection on our behavior. How often do we, like Ham, betray the trust of those closest to us by engaging in gossip or divulging sensitive information? How often do we, like Shem and Japheth, demonstrate compassion and loyalty, choosing to protect rather than expose the vulnerabilities of others?

God's response to Noah's family dynamics serves as a divine example of the importance of integrity and discretion in our relationships. It's a reminder that true honor lies not in the revelation of secrets but in the preservation of dignity and respect, even in the face of temptation or misunderstanding.

As we navigate our own familial and social spheres, let us heed the lessons of Noah's legacy. Let us strive to emulate the virtues of Shem and Japheth, showing compassion, loyalty, and discretion in our interactions with others.

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Divine Warning: The Consequences of Persistence in Sin

Nahum 3:6-7 (KJV) – “[6] And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing stock. [7] And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?”

God assures them that He will cast abominable filth upon them, rendering them vile and setting them as a gazing stock. God speaks in the future tense, offering them an opportunity to return to

Him. In this context, "vile" is used to describe the condition to which Nineveh will be reduced. It implies a state of moral degradation, disgrace, or contempt. The city will become loathsome in the eyes of others, likely as a result of its wickedness and impending judgment.

A "gazing stock" is something or someone presented for people to gaze upon, often with amazement, scorn, or astonishment. It can also be seen as a spectacle or an object of public ridicule. In Nahum 3:6-7, Nineveh is depicted as becoming a gazing stock, indicating that the city will be openly exposed to contempt and astonishment. The once-proud and powerful city will be reduced to a spectacle of ruin and desolation.

Satan delights when we lack faith because he opposes God's creation and wants people to ridicule it. As a student, Satan relishes seeing you spend your time watching television or playing video games, knowing it may lead to failure in school. He understands that failure can alienate you from others, causing them to avoid you.

Satan takes pleasure in watching young people engage in drugs and adultery because he knows the dark paths such habits lead to. However, God does not want that fate for you; He created you and hopes for your well-being. However, He allows you to follow the path you've chosen. Engaging in sin harms not only oneself but also others who are still God’s creation. Because God does not want anyone to continue harming His creation. He may bring punishment to lead them back to Him. If they persist, He may bring an end to them.

God does not desire to bring abominable filth upon anyone or make them a laughingstock. He was compelled to act against the wicked people of Nineveh because they persisted in mocking Him.

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The Peril of Pride: Lessons from Thebes and Babylon

Nahum 3:8-10 (KJV) – “[8] Are you better than Thebes, Which was situated by the waters of the Nile,

With water surrounding her, Whose defense was the sea (the Nile), Whose wall *consisted* of the sea?

[9] Ethiopia was her strength, And Egypt too, without limits. Put and Lubim were among her helpers.

[10] Yet she became an exile; She went into captivity. Her young children were dashed to pieces At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound with chains."

Usually, when we persist in sin, pride infiltrates our minds and makes us think that we are too great to be brought down. Perhaps you have a lot of money in your bank account and numerous assets worth billions of dollars to last you for generations. So, you tend to think that no matter what happens, you cannot become poor. I have heard people say that such and such a person can never be poor and that they will be forever rich. Many rich men think like that concerning their wealth.

I heard that the people who built the Titanic were so marveled by it that they said nothing could sink it, not even God. God gave the Assyrians an example of Thebes, how they were situated among rivers with waters surrounding them. He tells them how they had powerful nations like Egypt, Ethiopia, and Libya helping them, but still, they were taken into captivity. All their great men were bound in chains, something they never imagined happening.

Daniel 4:30-33 (KJV) – "[30] The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? [31] While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. [32] And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. [33] The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance blinded him to the reality that his power and success were ultimately bestowed upon him by God. As depicted in Daniel 1:1-2, it was God who delivered the Israelites into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar, yet Nebuchadnezzar failed to acknowledge this divine intervention. Consequently, God orchestrated events to humble the mighty Babylonian king and demonstrate His sovereignty over all earthly kingdoms, as outlined in Daniel 4:17. Despite Nebuchadnezzar's grandeur and conquests, he needed to comprehend that his authority and accomplishments were subject to the divine will of the Most High.

Nebuchadnezzar's journey serves as a poignant reminder of the dangers of pride and the necessity of recognizing God's supremacy. Despite his formidable reign and vast empire, Nebuchadnezzar's hubris led him to attribute his success solely to his own prowess, disregarding the role of divine intervention in his rise to power. However, God, in His infinite wisdom, orchestrated events to humble Nebuchadnezzar and reveal His dominion over all earthly kingdoms.

In Daniel 4, we witness Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience, as he is driven from his throne and forced to live among the beasts of the field. This drastic turn of events serves as a stark reminder of God's authority and sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation from a proud monarch to a humbled servant of God underscores the importance of acknowledging God's supremacy and submitting to His will.

Like Nebuchadnezzar, we too may fall prey to the pitfalls of pride and self-importance. When we become enamored with our achievements and abilities, we risk overlooking the role of God in our lives. However, God, in His mercy, may intervene to humble us and redirect our focus toward Him. It is through moments of humility and surrender that we come to recognize the true source of our strength and success.

Nebuchadnezzar's story serves as a cautionary tale for us all, reminding us of the fleeting nature of earthly power and the enduring sovereignty of God. As we navigate the complexities of life, we should remain humble before the Lord, acknowledging His authority, and seeking His guidance in all things.

Proverbs 16:18 (AMP) – “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Pride refers to an inflated sense of one's importance or achievements. It involves an attitude of superiority and self-sufficiency. The warning is against allowing pride to take root in our hearts, as it can lead to destructive consequences. When pride is present, destruction follows. It's not merely a coincidence; it's a warning about the inherent dangers of an arrogant and self-centered mindset. Pride paves the way for ruin and downfall.

A "haughty spirit" expands on the concept of pride. It describes an attitude of arrogance, condescension, and a sense of being better than others. A haughty spirit is characterized by an elevated view of oneself and a disregard for the perspectives and contributions of others. A "fall"

represents a decline or downfall, whether it be in personal relationships, achievements, status, or other aspects of life. The idea is that pride precedes and contributes to this eventual decline.

Imagine a successful executive who, in the pursuit of climbing the corporate ladder, becomes excessively proud of their achievements. They begin to disregard the input of colleagues, assuming they have all the answers. However, their pride blinds them to changing market trends and innovative ideas. Eventually, the company faces a downfall, and the once-proud executive realizes too late that humility is the key to sustained success.

Consider a social media influencer who gains fame and popularity. As their follower count grows, so does their pride. They start to believe they are invincible and immune to criticism. However, a scandal emerges, exposing a lack of authenticity in their carefully crafted image. The fall from social media grace becomes swift, serving as a stark reminder that humility and genuine connections are more enduring than fleeting popularity.

Picture a relationship expert who dispenses advice to others but becomes blinded by their own perceived wisdom. In their pride, they neglect the needs of their relationships, assuming they are above the challenges that others face. Unfortunately, their relationships crumble, revealing the destructive impact of neglecting humility and vulnerability.

Envision a political leader who rises to power with grand promises and charisma. As they amass authority, pride sets in, leading to a disregard for dissenting voices and a failure to address pressing issues. Eventually, their administration faces turmoil, and the nation suffers. All these examples illustrate that even leaders, with all their power, are not immune to the consequences of pride.

1 Peter 5:6 (AMP) – “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time.”

1 Peter 5:6 offers profound and practical guidance on the Christian virtue of humility. It urges believers to actively cultivate humility in their attitudes and actions, recognizing their dependence on God and submitting to His authority. The imagery of being under God's mighty hand emphasizes the importance of surrender and trust.

Additionally, the verse conveys a divine promise: those who humble themselves will experience God's exaltation. This is not a call to seek exaltation for its own sake but an acknowledgment that God honors and blesses a humble heart. The timing of this exaltation is entrusted to God's discretion, encouraging believers to patiently trust in His providence. Humility exalts.

Imagine a talented professional in a competitive industry. Instead of boasting about achievements, they consistently acknowledge the team's contributions, seek mentorship, and embrace a learning mindset. Over time, their humility fosters a positive work environment, leading to promotions and recognition from their superiors.

Consider a brand influencer who prioritizes authenticity over self-promotion. They share both successes and struggles, building genuine connections with their followers. Their humility and relatability attract a loyal and engaged audience, resulting in greater influence and positive impact.

In a family scenario, envision a parent who actively listens to their children, admits mistakes, and seeks to understand their perspectives instead of asserting dominance. This humble approach nurtures a healthy family dynamic, and over time, the children learn to appreciate and emulate these qualities.

Picture a community leader who prioritizes collaboration and servant leadership. They focus on addressing the needs of the community rather than seeking the spotlight. Through their humility and dedication, they earn the trust and respect of community members, garnering increased support for their initiatives.

Consider a friend who consistently supports others, celebrates their achievements, and genuinely cares about their well-being. This individual attracts strong and lasting friendships due to their humility and selflessness in relationships.

Divine Judgment: The Fall of the Arrogant

Nahum 3:11-13 (KJV) – "[11] Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. [12] All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. [13] Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars."

When God speaks of them being drunk, He refers to their state of confusion. 1 Corinthians 14:33 declares that God is not the author of confusion. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, God has bestowed upon us a spirit of soundness of mind. A mind filled with fear and devoid of faith is not sound; such a person is destined to perpetual confusion. Following the paths of sin only leads to further bewilderment, akin to the life of a drunken individual.

God also warns the Assyrians that they will be hidden away. Matthew 5:14 (KJV) states, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." However, instead of shining as a beacon of light, they have chosen to embrace the darkness enveloping the world. Light exposes while darkness conceals. Thus, they will be concealed because they walk in the paths of darkness.

Furthermore, the Lord informs the Assyrians that they will seek strength as their enemies afflict them. Sin has weakened them, leading them to seek strength. Hebrews 11:34 illustrates that faith empowers individuals, mentally, emotionally, and physically, whereas lack of faith results in weakness. We require divine strength to withstand the assaults of the Devil and his agents. God will render their strongholds as unstable as fig trees with the first ripe figs, causing them to be shaken and destroyed.

The phrase "thy people in the midst of thee are women" metaphorically underscores the weakness and vulnerability of Nineveh's inhabitants. In ancient contexts, likening a city's defenders to women depicted them as lacking in strength or courage for battle. The subsequent mention of gates being set wide open and fire devouring bars reinforces the notion of the city's defenses being easily overcome, with gates left unguarded for the enemy's entry and bars consumed by fire.

God warns them that He will allow their enemies to invade and fire shall consume their bars. Our current protection emanates from God, regardless of our beliefs. If God removes His hedge of protection, Satan will assail our lives with perilous fiery darts. Out of love, God had shielded the Assyrians from their enemies' attacks. However, their persistent rebellion and lack of faith prompted God to warn them of the removal of His protective hand.

Spiritual Solutions to Physical Problems

Nahum 3:14-15 (KJV) – "[14] Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the morter, make strong the brickkiln [15] There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts."

God is offering them physical strategies to address a spiritual issue. He tells them, "Draw water for the siege, fortify your strongholds: go into the clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the

brickkiln." God provides these instructions because He understands that, due to their lack of faith in Him, they tend to rely on physical solutions for spiritual challenges.

God has given them the room to do so, knowing that it's their likely course of action. However, He assures them that regardless of their efforts to shield themselves, they will not escape His wrath and punishment. This mirrors a common modern-day dilemma: we often strive to solve spiritual problems with physical remedies.

For instance, we might experience business losses or financial turmoil, leading us to work harder to earn more money. However, despite our efforts, the problems persist and even worsen. This creates a vicious cycle of striving and frustration.

One spiritual problem that might underlie such difficulties is the failure to tithe. When we neglect to return tithes and offerings, we open the door to financial setbacks, allowing the "devourer" to wreak havoc on our finances (Malachi 3:11). However, when we faithfully tithe and give offerings, God promises to protect our resources from destruction.

A friend shared her experience of facing losses in her grocery business. Despite returning tithe, her business was declining. It wasn't until she heard a sermon emphasizing the importance of giving offerings in addition to tithes that she realized where her problem lay. She realized that she was not returning offerings. She was only returning tithes. Upon committing to return offerings, her business began to thrive, with profits and customers increasing steadily.

It's essential to apply spiritual solutions to life's challenges because life itself is spiritual. For example, if you're facing difficulties and you know that failing to observe the Sabbath might be the cause, it's crucial to address this issue promptly. Do not seek solace in the apparent success of others who disregard the Sabbath. Remember that God deals with each person individually. Those who know the truth but disregard it may face harsher consequences than those who are unaware. Therefore, if you're aware of God's commands, it's vital to heed them, even if it seems others are prospering despite disobedience.

From Summit to Plummet: Nineveh's Tragic Decline

Nahum 3:16-19 (KJV) – "[16] Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. [17] Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. [18] Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth

them. [19] There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?”

"Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away" (Nahum 3:16):

This imagery suggests that Nineveh had become a thriving commercial center with merchants multiplying like the stars in the sky. However, the reference to the cankerworm (a destructive insect) spoiling and fleeing away implies that despite its prosperity, Nineveh would face a sudden and devastating downfall.

"Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are" (Nahum 3:17):

The comparison of the crowned (likely referring to leaders or rulers) to locusts and captains to grasshoppers underscores the temporary and fleeting nature of their power. The locusts and grasshoppers may seem formidable, but they are ultimately transient. The metaphor suggests that the leaders and captains of Nineveh, despite their apparent strength, will scatter and disappear when faced with adversity.

"Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them" (Nahum 3:18):

The imagery of shepherds slumbering signifies neglect and failure of leadership. The nobles, who were once in positions of honor, will now dwell in the dust, indicating their humiliation and downfall. The scattering of the people upon the mountains suggests dispersion and lack of unity, with no one coming to gather them back together.

"There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nahum 3:19):

The verse emphasizes the severity of Nineveh's condition, describing a grievous and incurable wound. The clapping of hands is a gesture of derision and mockery by those who hear about Nineveh's downfall. The concluding question highlights the widespread impact of Nineveh's wickedness, suggesting that its influence and harm were felt by many.

In summary, these four verses vividly depict the once-mighty Nineveh facing a sudden and irreversible downfall, with its leaders, nobles, and people scattered and humiliated. The imagery serves as a powerful warning about the consequences of pride, wickedness, and neglect of God's ways.

Careful study of the book of Nahum reveals that God is not cruel, as some depict Him to be. God is great in power but slow to anger. If He delighted in cruelty, He would have destroyed the people of Nineveh without warning. He had to warn them first before destroying them. The book of Nahum gives us hope that one day affliction will end.

The terrible situation you are going through right now is momentary, whether it is unemployment, sickness, losing a loved one, lack of a spouse, bankruptcy, or any other problem. When we acknowledge that all these problems lack permanency, life becomes more bearable because our focus shifts to the great life in the city awaiting us. We will rest in the arms of God our Father, who is a stronghold in the day of trouble.

As we lean on God, He will comfort us and shelter us under His protective shadow, where no harm or danger can come close. Through the book of Nahum, we also learn that the prosperity of the wicked is as short-lived as a snowflake melting on a warm palm or a soap bubble popping in the air. Do not be discouraged when you see wicked people 'succeeding' while you are working hard and waiting for God to open your ways. In the season of waiting, know that God is working in you, for you, and through you. His best work will be done in you, for your benefit, and through you to benefit other people.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being with me. Please forgive me where I have sinned. Put a burden on my heart to serve You and to do everything that You have told me to do. I thank You because You delight in mercy and You are slow to anger. Forgive me for all the sins that I have committed. I thank You for being a stronghold in the day of trouble. Help me to always lean on You and to always acknowledge that I am dependent on You. Assist me in listening keenly to Your Words

and obeying everything that You have instructed me to do. Increase my knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of Your Word.

Please help me to apply whatever truth that comes my way in the best viable way and make my heart more open to truth. Restore the good things that I once lost through sin. Increase my level of discernment and help me to carefully discern the spiritual solutions that you are providing me. I trust and believe that with You by my side, I will move from summit to summit. Be with me in everything that I do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. What are some of the things that God has been telling you to do that have been a burden in your heart, and you have not yet done them? List them, then ask God to help you do them and to guide you on how to do them.
2. What are some of the problems that you are going through? List them on a piece of paper and pray over them daily. While praying, ask God for solutions to those problems.
3. Reflect on the times that you have ignored God’s voice and the consequences you received as a result of that.
4. Reflect on the times that you have obeyed God’s voice and the blessings you received from that.
5. Ask God to take pride away from you.

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CHAPTER 78

FAITH LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF PROPHET HABAKKUK

Habakkuk did not hesitate to ask God a question,

He esteemed God's command and did not take it as a suggestion,

Habakkuk needed answers and received them in quiet ingestion,

God will answer you, get ready to take the truth in digestion.

God told Habakkuk to write the vision and make it plain,

A vision gives you direction on where to go when riding life's train,

A vision makes things bearable even on the rough and tough terrain,

Write down all your goals, the minor ones and the main.

The proud shall fail but by faith the just shall live,

Like a hand from an open heart, by faith the just shall give,

For they know it is more blessed to give than to receive,

By faith, the upright, a legacy shall live and leave.

Habakkuk showed faith in God in the face of impending adversity.

God gave him commands to lead them to unending productivity,

He gave them commands to lead them out of captivity,

God wants us to have trust in Him, for He wants to set us free.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Introduction

The name Habakkuk means to embrace. Habakkuk was one of the prophets of the Bible whom the writer of Hebrews meant when he talked about the faith of the prophets. The book of Habakkuk is believed to have been written during the late 7th century BCE, likely between 609 and 597 BCE, a time of significant political and social turmoil in the ancient kingdom of Judah. At that time, Judah was under the threat of the Babylonian Empire, which was expanding its power and influence in the region. The Babylonians were known for their cruelty and had already conquered many nations, including the northern kingdom of Israel.

Habakkuk, the prophet, is deeply troubled by the moral and social decay he sees within Judah. He is also troubled by the impending Babylonian invasion, which probably is a divine punishment for the wickedness and idolatry within his own nation. In the first chapter, Habakkuk poses a series of questions and complaints to God, questioning why God allows evil and injustice to persist and why He would use the wicked Babylonians to punish His people.

In response, God provides answers and assurances to Habakkuk's concerns. God affirms His sovereignty and explains that the Babylonians will eventually face their own judgment for their pride and cruelty. The righteous are encouraged to live by faith despite the challenging circumstances and to trust in God's ultimate justice.

The Book of Habakkuk, therefore, addresses themes of faith, justice, and theodicy (the problem of evil). It serves as a dialogue between a prophet seeking understanding and a God who provides answers and calls for trust and faith in His divine plan, even in the face of difficult and distressing

times. The book is relatively short but offers valuable insights into the relationship between humanity and the divine in the midst of adversity and moral challenges.

The book emphasizes the prophet's questioning, complaints, and the answers and assurances he receives from God. The book is unique among the prophetic books in the Bible because it primarily consists of a conversation between the prophet Habakkuk and God, rather than a collection of prophetic oracles.

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Questioning God

Habakkuk 1:2-4 (AMP) – “[2] O Lord, how long will I call for help and You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save. [3] Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? For destruction and violence are before me; Strife continues and contention arises. [4] Therefore, the law is ineffective and ignored and justice is never upheld, For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore, justice becomes perverted.”

Many are confused by how God works but they cannot dare ask Him. So, they end up making assumptions about God which are not true. They end up giving God all sorts of negative attributes that have resulted from misunderstanding Him. Some call Him cruel; others call Him selfish, and others call Him unfair to mention but a few. Some people have given up on religion, others have given up on Christianity because of this confusion.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (KJV) – "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." God is not the author of confusion. So, He does not want you to be confused. God is the author of peace, meaning, He wants you to have peace. Confusion brings conflict, but peace takes away conflict. Confusion stirs up trouble, peace calms the stormy seas of trouble. Confusion roughens up situations, peace smoothens situations. Confusion leads to death; peace leads to life. God's handwriting spells out peace, while Satan's handwriting spells out confusion. Therefore, confusion needs to be avoided while peace needs to be tightly embraced.

When the Bible says that God is not the author of confusion it means that God does not want you to be confused. He wants you to have peace of mind so that you can worship Him joyfully and focus on Him. He knows that you cannot have peace if you don't know Him and you don't know His will for your life. He does not want you to continue living a life of trial and error. Instead, He wants you to move fast and forward. Therefore, He is willing to give you direction of the path He has ordained for you. He wants you to ask Him whatever questions that are troubling your mind because He wants you to get blessed by building a relationship with Him.

By faith, Habakkuk asked God questions that he really needed answers for. Prophet Habakkuk raised questions and complaints to God regarding the apparent injustice and wickedness in Judah. This act of questioning demonstrated his desire to understand God's ways and his faith in seeking answers from the divine God.

Unlike Habakkuk, most of us see some questions as too inconsequential to ask God. We think that we are meant to ask God only those things that are highly significant. God wants us to ask Him everything that we don't know and understand. When He tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to pray without ceasing, He knows that not all times we have important things worrying us. Therefore, He expects us to take everything to Him, what is major and what is minor. He does not want even the lightest burden to be on our shoulders. Thus, He is willing to assist us in carrying all our baggage,

so that we may be happy and free. God wants us to increase in knowledge. God wants us to ask Him questions.

Waiting for God's Response

Habakkuk 2:1 (KJV) – “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”

After his initial questions, Habakkuk chooses to station himself and wait for God's response. This act of waiting reflects his faith and readiness to receive God's answer. We talk to God, but we rarely listen to His response. Our conversation with God is often one-sided. When a dialogue is single sided it ceases to be a dialogue. We are the students, and God is the Master Teacher. Unfortunately, many times we take the role of being the instructor who is constantly speaking and give God the role of the student who has no right to question or comment on the lecture.

This habit leads us to frustration. We get angry with God because He has not answered our prayers when we should be angry at ourselves because we did not pause to listen. This behavior is dangerous as it has broken many relationships and associations. What the other person has to say should be equally as important as what we have to say.

Habakkuk showed faith in God when He waited for the Lord’s response. He assumed the role of a student who needed answers from the Divine Instructor. Therefore, after he finished questioning, Habakkuk waited for God’s divine response and God responded. Do we pause to wait for God’s response?

Have a Vision and Write it Down

Habakkuk 2:2-3 (KJV) – "[2] And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. [3] For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

God instructed Habakkuk to write the vision and make it plain upon tables. He told Habakkuk that the vision will be fulfilled at an appointed time. God did not overwrite the obstacles that they may

meet before the fulfillment of the vision. Instead, He gave them assurance, telling them that even though it tarries, it will surely come.

Comedian and talk show host Steve Harvey says that this Bible text is one of two texts in the Bible that completely changed his life and made him successful. The other text that changed his life was James 4:2. When talking about Habakkuk 2:2-3, he emphasized the power of writing something down. He challenged his audience to list down what they wanted in life on a piece of paper (he recommended them to write 300 things that they wanted God to do for them).

Steve told them to read the list every night and every morning. He urged them to go back to the list at the end of the year, ticking off all the things they had written down on the list that they had gotten. He assured them that at the end of the year, they would have ticked off at least 30 things from that list which represents ten percent of the entire list.

The advice Steve gave is a tremendous thing to practice. I cannot assure you of the number of things you will be able to tick off your list at the end of the year. However, I stress the point that you need to write down your goals, plans and objectives that you wish to accomplish.

On 31st December 2024 (New Year's Eve), Elder Richard invited us to fellowship at their Seventh Day Adventist church in Kistarcsa town. In that fellowship, my friend Enock said something profound about writing. He said, he wants to go and write his new year's resolutions. He said that 90% of everything he had set to do the previous year that he had written down was successfully accomplished by September. When he said that I remembered how we often ignore writing New Year resolutions.

In a short prayer session (with Sharon, Robert and Vera) during the ten days of prayer on 12th January 2024 (immediately after the Sabbath was over), Robert said the same thing. He said that we need to write down our prayer requests for the year. He said that the method of writing down prayer points has always worked for him. He says when he does that, he encounters at least 95% of answered prayers.

I was sitting in the house one day and I decided to go through a notebook from four years ago where I had written down plans that I wished to carry out. I was astonished to realize that almost everything I had written there had been accomplished. Some of those things I had written down had not been accomplished the way I had planned for them to be fulfilled but they were still

fulfilled. Another day, I was going through one of my old notebooks. In that notebook, I had written somewhere roughly, “I would want a scholarship.” Surprisingly, I read that about three months after I was given a scholarship to study for a Masters Degree in Mechatronical Engineering. As you are journeying to your vision, things may not always go as planned but you will get there.

I often have a practice of writing down the things that I wish to accomplish every week on the first day of the week. On Sunday, after the Sabbath is over, I write down all tasks that I’m planning to do in the coming week. When I evaluate my performance on Friday (the sixth day) before the Sabbath, I would often get frustrated when I realize that I have not been able to do some of the things that I had written down. Sometimes and often the reason is, some tasks took longer than I had expected. Therefore, I was not able to do everything that I had planned to do. Sometimes there can be an emergency that made me not to finish the tasks.

What I would do is to carry forward the undone tasks to the following week. This would be frustrating when I realize that I still haven’t been able to do them when I evaluate my performance at the end of that other week. But I never gave up. I would keep on carrying the tasks forward. Sometimes, it may take as long as three months for me to finish the said tasks, but a time comes when I finally finish them. The Bible says even though the vision tarries, it will surely happen (Habakkuk 2:3).

There is power in writing things down. After God spoke the Commandments, He wrote them. The prophets would speak the message to the people whom God had sent them to. The messages they spoke were afterward written and they have been of boundless value to us through the ages. Writing gives a message a higher level of permanency than speaking.

Writing also comes in handy in clarifying things. When you write an idea on a piece of paper, it becomes clearer as opposed to just having it in your head. From my experience, the more I write, the more my thoughts become organized. The more I write Godly material, the more I have clear and sound judgment and my reasoning and thinking ability keeps on getting higher.

These are some of the benefits of writing:

Improved Memory Retention

- Writing engages multiple areas of the brain, reinforcing the information and making it easier to recall later.
- It's especially effective for learning and studying, as the act of writing helps commit details to memory.

Enhanced Clarity and Focus

- Putting thoughts on paper helps organize your mind, clarify ideas, and make better decisions.
- It reduces mental clutter, allowing you to focus on what's important.

Boosted Creativity

- Writing encourages free-flowing thoughts and brainstorming, sparking creativity.
- It's a powerful tool for idea generation and problem-solving.

Stress Relief and Emotional Processing

- Journaling or writing about emotions can help process feelings and reduce stress.
- It's an effective way to understand and manage emotions, leading to better mental health.

Improved Productivity and Goal Achievement

- Writing down tasks and goals increases accountability and motivation.
- To-do lists, planners, or written reminders keep you organized and productive.

Better Understanding and Reflection

- Writing encourages deeper thinking about topics, helping you understand them more thoroughly.
- It also allows for self-reflection, fostering personal growth.

Record-Keeping and Legacy

- Written records preserve information, memories, and ideas for future reference.
- It helps track progress, remember key moments, and share experiences with others.

Strengthened Communication Skills

- Writing improves vocabulary, grammar, and the ability to articulate thoughts clearly.
- It sharpens communication, benefiting both written and verbal expression.

Physical and Cognitive Benefits

- Handwriting, in particular, enhances fine motor skills and cognitive processing.
- It activates different brain regions compared to typing, which can deepen understanding.

Increased Gratitude and Positivity

- Writing down things you're grateful for fosters a more positive mindset.
- It shifts focus from problems to blessings, promoting emotional well-being.

The value of writing was first emphasized to me and other students by Dr. Martin Mburu who was the Assistant Professor of English at the United States International University when he taught us a course titled *Strategies to University Success*. Before, he taught me that course, he had previously taught me a course titled *Composition 2* which he highly emphasized the value of reading. Another person who emphasized to me the value of writing at around that time was my friend Brian Khaemba.

Brian had visited me, and we decided to take a walk around the area (we were probably going to the shops). As we were leaving the house, Brian took a notebook and a pen and told me that he could not leave the house without those items. This was new to me. Most people, especially young people, will tell you that they cannot leave the house without their phones. I was impressed when Brian told me that.

While we were walking, he started telling me the value of reading and writing. He told me that the nation of Ethiopia was not colonized like the other African nations because they knew how to read and write. I do not know if that is true, what I know is that God wants you to document everything down because He is a God who is organized and who keeps records. God wants you to have a vision and by faith, God wants you to write it down.

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The Just Shall Live by Faith

Habakkuk 2:4 (KJV) – “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

“The faith that strengthened Habakkuk and all the holy and the just in those days of deep trial was the same faith that sustains God's people today. In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power. Day by day, through faith in God, his hope and courage may be renewed. “The just shall live by his faith.” In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom their varied necessities demand.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 386.3, Ellen G. White.

Proud people are not upright people. They are bound to fail if they persist in their pride. Such people are not righteous and just because pride is sin and the root cause of all other sins. One whose heart is haughty is unstable in the mind which results in instability in the thought processes and weakness in character. Such a person has welcomed doubt and fear to dwell in his heart. Therefore, he is prone to make poor decisions that will result in failure. Having such a leader will lead to the improper functioning of the jurisdiction in which they or she leads.

“The just shall live by faith.” Elijah did not have to worry much about the drought that befell the unrighteous Israelites because he lived by faith. God provided for him amid the drought. Isaac prospered in the middle of the heathen Philistine people in a land that was facing famine because he lived by faith. Job did not curse God and die despite the severe challenges he faced because he lived by faith. Daniel was saved alive in the lion’s den because he lived by faith.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were unburnt in the fiery furnace that was heated seven times because they lived by faith. Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac when they were past age and their reproductive organs had died because they lived by faith. A little boy named David defeated the giant Goliath because he lived by faith. Faith opens doors to astonishing miracles. Faith opens the windows of heaven. Faith secures your walk through the heavenly pearly gates. Faith moves mountains. Faith moves fountains. Faith pleases God. The just shall live by faith.

True Satisfaction

Habakkuk 2:5-8 (KJV) – "[5] Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: [6] Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! How long? And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! [7] Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto

them? [8] Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein."

This passage specifically addresses a "proud man" who transgresses through wine, displaying a character that is not content, constantly seeking to enlarge his desires. The imagery used compares this person to death and hell, suggesting insatiable and destructive tendencies.

The mention of transgression by wine could symbolize the misuse or abuse of wealth and luxury, leading to moral decay. The individual described is proud and unwilling to stay at home, constantly seeking to expand and accumulate. This person is depicted as insatiable, with desires that enlarge like hell, which represents a realm of the afterlife associated with punishment.

The text suggests that people from various nations will take up a parable against this proud person, expressing a sense of judgment or warning ("Woe") against the one who increases what is not rightfully his and burdens himself with "thick clay," possibly referring to greed of excessive wealth or material possessions.

The verses predict a sudden rise of those who will retaliate against this proud and unjust person. The imagery of being spoiled or plundered in return for the spoiling of many nations suggests a cycle of retribution. The reasons given for this retaliation include shedding of blood and violence against the people, the land, the city, and all its inhabitants.

These verses from Habakkuk convey a message of warning against a proud and greedy individual who, through violence and exploitation, accumulates wealth and power. The prophecy foretells a time when this person will face consequences, as other nations revolt against him, seeking retribution for the harm he caused.

The person who does not know God and the one who makes a deliberate choice not to trust in Him, looks for satisfaction from the wrong avenues. Some will look for satisfaction through intemperate eating, but they don't find it since lack of self-control in food leads to a dilapidated health state. Some look for satisfaction through heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages.

Some are heavily depressed; so, they turn to drugs attempting to rise from depression. Unfortunately, these drugs make them sink deeper into depression. Some get heavily disappointed after they have accumulated wealth which they thought would give them happiness and satisfaction,

but it fails to fulfil the desired mandate. It often results in more gloom if the wealth gotten has been acquired illegally. Doubt in God's Word can bring short-term pleasure but it can never bring satisfaction. True satisfaction is found by trusting in God's divine Word.

True Prosperity

Habakkuk 2:9-14 (KJV) – "[9] Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! [10] Thou hast consulted

shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. [11] For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. [12] Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! [13] Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? [14] For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Covetousness is sin (Exodus 20:17). Luke 12:15 (KJV) – "And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." Some people measure their value by the material things that they possess. They measure themselves by the houses they live in, the cars they drive and the clothes that they wear. Therefore, we use the same standards to measure other people.

The value of a person's life is fully understood by the Creator. Jesus died on the cross for everyone because He highly values everybody. Covetousness and a high esteem of material things lead many to commit sin to get them. Many are deceived to believe that success and prosperity is defined by the amount of money they have made. Therefore, they use all means, including illegal and immoral means to accumulate riches.

The Bible says that those people who use evil schemes to get wealth bring shame upon themselves and their families. It says that such people sin against their own souls. The huge accumulation of wealth is not related to their mental well-being. Their wealth can make them lack peace of mind because it was acquired by dubious means. It can make them have ill-health because the wealth they have acquired has made them to indulge in unhealthy eating and drinking habits.

Often when robbers and con artists finish a mission successfully, they go to a bar or a club to 'enjoy' what they have acquired illegally. They indulge in heavy drinking which in turn damages their body organs and impairs their judgment. Most of the people who have acquired wealth illegally end up losing it. Thus, their success is shorter than leprechauns. True and ever-lasting success can never be found when you lean on your own understanding.

True success and ever-lasting prosperity can only be acquired when you have faith. It can only be gotten by trusting in God alone. God wants you to be successful that is why He wants you to have faith in Him.

Leading Others in Truth

Habakkuk 2:15-17 (KJV) – "[15] Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! [16] Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. [17] For the violence of

Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein."

Some people know what is right and they do it but they deceive others to pursue the wrong path so that they can witness their failure and laugh at it. The Devil and his army know that righteous living leads to life and the good it has to offer in abundance but they deceive you to do evil because they want your life to be cut short. Some people sell harmful drugs which they don't use because they know that drugs are harmful. Some preachers know that Saturday is the Sabbath and it was never changed but they cannot dare preach it.

We are to live as wise people by living by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4). God is good (Psalm 100:5). God is love (1 John 4:16). God loves everybody (John 3:16). God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). God is truth (John 14:6, John 16:13). God reigns from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2), He is infinite and everything about Him is infinite. Every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17). God is the bread of life (John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51). God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5, John 8:12). God is above all things (John 3:31). God is the best, He is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

All these qualities of God are in His Word because God's Word and God are the same (John 1:1).

Therefore, if God is good, His word is good and since His Word is good it can only bring forth good fruit. It cannot bring harm. God's Word is love just as He is. Therefore, everything it produces has love written all over it. God loves everybody means that His Word is meant to bless everyone. God delights in mercy and He forgives and saves through His Word.

God is truth, His Word is truth. His word is the foundation of all truth. God's Word is infinite and it reigns from everlasting to everlasting just like Him. His Word cannot be exhausted. It also means that His Word carries infinite solutions and possibilities. Every good and perfect gift comes from God, it comes from God's Word. God is the bread of life, if you feed on His Word, you will have life.

God is light; thus His Word is instrumental in illuminating the dark areas of your life. His Word sheds light on what you don't understand and erases all confusion. God is above all things, and if you diligently study and apply His Word, it will cause you to be above only and not beneath

(Deuteronomy 28:13). God is perfect, His Word aims to make you perfect. His Word aims to bring out the best version of yourself.

Matthew 5:19 (KJV) – "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Those who practice and teach truth will be highly elevated by God because they have lived their lives elevating other people. God's Word is truth and carries all the attributes of God. God's Word only exalts, it never brings down. Those who do not live by it and those who teach false doctrines are likened in Habakkuk 2:15 to those who make their neighbors drunk so that they may look at their nakedness and laugh. Such people will receive curses from the God of justice because they are cursing others. As leaders in all capacities, we have been given the responsibility to lead people on the right road and the only way to lead them correctly is by using truth to guide them.

God has created you to be a leader. He wants you to lead others in truth.

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Profitable Activities

Habakkuk 2:18-20 (KJV) – "[18] What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? [19] Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. [20] But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Graven images usually take a long time to be artistically modelled. Some may even take years to be carved. Secondly, the material used in some of them is expensive as some are made from gold and other precious stones. The people who spend time carving idols waste their energy, time, and resources to do work that only results in great losses.

Habakkuk asks, “What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it?” I know most of you reading this have never made a graven image, so, you feel that this verse does not relate to you. This verse touches on the second commandment, which is found in Exodus 20:4-6. It is as unprofitable to disobey the Second Commandment as it is unprofitable to disobey the other nine. Therefore, when Habakkuk asks that question, he is essentially asking, “What profit does disobeying the commandments of God give you?”

Some people work so hard to disobey God. They use a lot of time, energy, and resources to walk the broad way than they would have used when walking the narrow way. For example people spend too much money in night clubs drinking the most expensive alcoholic drinks which damages their health. If they had simply stayed at home and rested, they would have saved that money. If they had stayed at home and read an informative book, they would have added value to their minds through the increase of knowledge. If they had shared a quote from the book or a verse from the Bible on social media or via a text message to friends, they would have added value to someone else’s life.

The person who disobeys God’s commands devalues his life and the lives of others. This may be in the form of the example He is portraying. The cloud of negative influence that passes above those who are under his influence makes them imitate habits that are not meant to be copied. Thus, the quality of their lives gets downgraded.

Deuteronomy 8:1 (KJV) – “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers.”

Obeying the commandments of God is engaging in profitable activities.

God wants you to engage in profitable activities. He wants you to trust in His Word. He wants you to obey His commandments.

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Habakkuk's Prayer of Faith

Habakkuk 3:1-19 (KJV) – "[1] A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. [2] O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. [3] God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. [4] And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of

His power. [5] Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet. [6] He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting. [7] I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. [8] Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? [9] Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. [10] The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. [11] The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. [12] Thou didst march through the land in indignation, Thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. [13] Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. [14] Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. [15] Thou didst walk through the sea with Thine horses, through the heap of great waters. [16] When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when He cometh up unto the people, He will invade them with His troops. [17] Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: [18] Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. [19] The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

In Habbakuk's prayer, we see that he acknowledges God's sovereignty. God reigns over nature and nations and works all things for His purposes. We can also see that he has faith amid adversity. Trusting in God does not depend on circumstances but on His unchanging character. His prayer portrays joy in salvation. True joy is found in God alone, even when earthly provisions fail. Habbakuk finds his strength in God. God equips His people to endure trials and rise above challenges.

Habakkuk expresses his trust and faith in God's sovereignty, even in the face of impending adversity.

While Habakkuk's actions are not extensively detailed in the book, his willingness to question God, his patience in waiting for God's response, and his ultimate declaration of trust and joy in God's salvation are expressions of faith and devotion in the midst of challenging circumstances. These actions demonstrate his commitment to seeking understanding and remaining faithful to God's purpose.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank you for all that you have done for me. I also thank you for learning the lessons that I have learned through the book of Habakkuk. Forgive me for the sins that I have committed. Please help me to have goals that glorify you and will bless other people. Make me find true satisfaction and true prosperity. Help me to lead others to the truth and to engage in profitable and righteous productive activities alone. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Is there a question that you have been shying off to ask God? Ask Him.
2. Write down your goals, both major and minor, and pray for them daily.
3. Ask God what you can do to lead others to truth.
4. Do an honest assessment of yourself. Are you just in all your ways? Ask God to help you in your weak areas.
5. Find out the righteous activities that you can engage in that are within your ability and current resources.
6. Ask God to increase your faith daily whenever you pray.

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CHAPTER 79

THE FAITH OF PROPHET ZEPHANIAH

In Judah's streets, where idols stood tall,

Zephaniah rose and heeded God's call,

He warned the people, to prevent them from eternal fall,

He was chosen by God to awaken the dying soul.

Zephaniah means the Lord has hidden,

God hides and protects what He treasures,

Lest the enemy comes to tamper with God's chosen,

God hides, protects, and loves in boundless measures.

The day will come, fierce as flame,

A sweep of wrath, a holy claim,

Zephaniah warned to turn people to praise God's name,

He hoped for change, to put an end to their dangerous game.

Through cities dark with sin's decay,

He warned of dawn's impending day,

He yielded to God to mold him like clay,

Let's yield to God, not tomorrow but today.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - “[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Background and History of the Prophet Zephaniah

Zephaniah 1:1 (KJV) - “The Word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.”

The name "Zephaniah" (צְפַנְיָה, *Tzephanyah*) is of Hebrew origin. "Zephaniah" means "The Lord has hidden", "The Lord has treasured", or “The Lord protects. The name suggests God’s protection and possibly refers to the prophet being hidden or protected during a time of great peril. The meaning of his name might also symbolize the protection of the faithful remnant during the coming judgment.

Zephaniah was the son of Cushi. Cushi (כּוּשִׁי, Kushiy) means "Cushite" or "Ethiopian" (referring to the region of Cush, which is associated with the land south of Egypt). The Prophet Zephaniah, whose father was Cushi, belonged to the tribe of Judah. This is indicated by his genealogy, which connects him to several notable figures of Judah's lineage.

Cushi was the son of Gedaliah. Gedaliah (גְּדַלְיָה, Gedalyah) means "The Lord is great" or "God is great." Gedaliah was the son of Amariah. Amariah (אֲמַרְיָה, Amaryah) means "The Lord has said" or "The Lord speaks." Amariah was the son of Hizkiah. Hizkiah (חִזְקִיָּהוּ, Hizkiyahu) means "The Lord is my strength" or "God strengthens." Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah. Josiah (יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ, Yoshiyahu) means "The Lord supports" or "The Lord heals."

Zephaniah was a prophet during a time of significant religious and political change in Judah. His ministry likely took place during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), a period marked by attempts at religious reform.

Zephaniah prophesied during the early part of Josiah's reign, before the king's significant religious reforms. This was a time when idolatry and moral corruption were widespread in Judah, following the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, who had led the people into deep apostasy.

Zephaniah's prophecies came during a period of instability. The Assyrian Empire, which had dominated the region, was weakening, and Babylon was emerging as a new power. Josiah, influenced by the rediscovery of the Book of the Law (likely Deuteronomy) during his reign, initiated reforms to remove idolatry and restore true worship in Judah.

Despite Josiah's efforts, much of Judah remained entrenched in idolatrous practices. Zephaniah's prophecies reflect the ongoing struggle between the forces of reform and the deeply rooted corruption in society.

Key Themes in the Book of Zephaniah

The Day of the Lord

Zephaniah is particularly known for his emphasis on the "Day of the Lord," a time of divine judgment that would come upon Judah, the surrounding nations, and ultimately the whole earth. This day would bring both destruction and salvation—a theme that resonates throughout the prophetic books.

Judgment and Punishment

Zephaniah warned of imminent judgment against Judah for its sins, particularly idolatry, complacency, and social injustice. He also prophesied against surrounding nations, including Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria, declaring that God's judgment was universal.

Call to Repentance

Zephaniah called the people of Judah to repentance, urging them to seek the Lord, righteousness, and humility before the Day of the Lord arrived. He emphasized that repentance could lead to protection and salvation amid the coming judgment.

Hope and Restoration

Despite the severe warnings, Zephaniah's prophecy concludes with a message of hope. He foretells the restoration of a remnant of Israel, who would be purified and would worship God faithfully. This future hope also includes the gathering of the nations to serve the Lord, pointing to a time of universal peace and blessing.

Like other prophets in the Bible, Zephaniah displayed remarkable faith in declaring God's message of impending judgment. Despite the pervasive corruption and idolatry in Judah, Zephaniah faithfully delivered God's warnings, trusting in the righteousness and justice of God.

Zephaniah's role as a prophet required great perseverance, as his messages of judgment were likely met with resistance and hostility from those who were complacent or opposed to reform. His unwavering commitment to proclaiming the truth reflects the kind of enduring faith celebrated in Hebrews 11.

Zephaniah held onto the hope of God's future restoration. Even in the face of coming destruction, he prophesied about the purification and preservation of a faithful remnant, reflecting a deep trust in God's ultimate plan for redemption.

The dual themes of judgment and salvation in Zephaniah's prophecies resonate with the broader message of faith in Hebrews 11, where the prophets are honored for their faith in God's promises. Zephaniah's message points to the necessity of judgment for the purification of God's people and the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promises.

Proclaimed God's Judgment with Boldness

Zephaniah 1:2-3 (KJ21) - "'[2] I will utterly consume all things from off the land,' saith the Lord. [3] 'I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from the land,' saith the Lord."

Zephaniah delivered God's message of impending judgment upon Judah, Jerusalem, and the surrounding nations faithfully. Despite the harshness of these prophecies, Zephaniah showed his faith by proclaiming them boldly, trusting in God's righteousness and justice.

As a result of their iniquity, God promised to consume all things from off the land. God said that he would consume man and beast, the fowls of the heaven and the fishes of the sea. Sin stirs up God's wrath. Righteousness stirs up the joy of the Lord. When God is angry, He might take away things from you. God's taking away is an expression of His divine love. He takes away things so that your life can be decluttered for you to focus on Him.

Some people are always glued to their electronic gadgets such as phones and laptops doing things that do not glorify God. God might take away those gadgets so that those people can focus on Him. The first time I did a serious Bible study, I did it for around four hours, one Saturday. After doing that Bible study, I took a short nap and kept my phone on charge. When I woke up my phone failed to switch on again despite many attempts to try to switch it on. I stayed without a smart phone for a while, but I grew spiritually because I replaced the time I would spend with my phone to read the Bible.

God might delay giving you something because He wants your attention. He might delay giving you employment or money to further your studies because He wants time with you before He gives you those things. He knows that if He gives you those things that you are asking for immediately, you will not have time with Him because those things will keep you busy.

Once they keep you busy, and cause you to have no time for God, you will be building on a weak foundation and what you are building will come to ruins in a brief time. God wants to give you eternal blessings and He wants you to have eternal success, not just long-term success. Therefore, He delays some things so that you can have a durable foundation through your relationship with Him.

In his sermons, Pastor Morris Ndolo delights in giving testimonies of his transition from primary school to secondary school (or high school). He says that it took him ten years to make that transition because he did not have school fees to enable him to join high school. In those ten years, he would pray that when God gives him money to study, he will become a pastor. God finally came through for him and now he is a pastor.

God used his servant Zephaniah to proclaim His judgment that was going to come. God's destruction of everything was a form of cleansing. For example, when a tomato is rotten, you throw

it away, you do not put it with the other tomatoes. When food is poisoned on one side, you throw the whole food away, you do not just throw the part that is poisoned.

God wants to end iniquity that is why He will destroy everything that had taints of sin and bring a new heaven and a new earth. Revelation 21:1 (KJ21) - "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Zephaniah proclaimed this message with boldness.

Zephaniah 1:14-16 (KJ21) - “The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hasteneth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.”

Another word for a mighty man is a strong man. To the eyes of many, a strong man seems untouchable like Elliot Ness. A lady from my church named Leah told me that she sees me as unshakeable because of how I relentlessly continue with God’s mission despite opposition. She was wrong. I am not unshakeable on my own, and no man is for that matter.

It is God’s strength that imparts strength to men, making them unshakeable. Those who rely on their own strength will be put to shame. Zephaniah records that those ‘strong men’ will not only cry, but they will also cry bitterly. Imagine seeing the strongest person you know crying. This means that their weakness will be made vivid as it will be openly displayed.

Many of the prophecies in Zephaniah are understood by scholars and theologians to have had partial fulfillment in events like the Babylonian invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. These events were seen as manifestations of divine judgment as described in the prophecy.

The "Day of the Lord" concept often carries eschatological (end-times) significance in biblical prophecy. Zephaniah’s prophecies such as these mostly pointed to a future final judgment and the ultimate end of the world. From this perspective, the full realization of Zephaniah's vision may be understood as yet to come, representing a future event when divine justice will be fully manifested.

Called the People to Unite in Repentance

Zephaniah 2:1-3 (KJ21) - "[1] Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired, [2] Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. [3] Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, who have upheld His judgment. Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

Zephaniah demonstrated his faith by urging the people of Judah to seek the Lord, righteousness, and humility to potentially avoid or mitigate the coming judgment. His call for repentance showed his belief in God's mercy and the possibility of redemption for those who turn back to God.

The word gather means to assemble. Zephaniah called the people to assemble in earnest worship. The people were to repent their sins before facing God's judgment. God gave this message to everyone because He always wants to save everybody. Through Zephaniah, God told people to gather. The Lord did not give that message to one single person in solitude. He wanted the people to join in humility, acknowledging their sins and repenting. It would not do much good if only one-person lived-in righteousness while the others lived in iniquity.

As a righteous person, make sure that you are your neighbor's keeper. Don't be selfish. Like Zephaniah, share widely whatever small amount of truth that has come your way. Their transformation is not dependent on you. It is dependent on God. Enjoy fellowship despite the challenges that might sometimes come with it.

Fellowship gives social support. At times you might feel too lazy to read your Bible. However, when you have set time aside to fellowship with a group of people, it becomes easier. If you are the type of person who loves doing things in a group, fellowship will really come in handy for your spiritual growth. However, you should not neglect personal Bible study. If you are the type of person who does not love groups, study the Bible on your own but do not neglect fellowship.

Prophesied Hope and Restoration

Zephaniah 3:12-13 (KJ21) - "[12] I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. [13] The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak

lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Zephaniah's faith is also evident in his prophecies of hope and restoration. Despite the severe judgments, he foretold a future where a remnant of God's people would be purified and would rejoice in God's presence. This message of hope underscores his trust in God's ultimate plan to redeem and restore His people.

God was going to give the Israelites a spiritual restoration whereby they would sin no more and they would not speak lies. God wants to restore us to be better than Adam and Eve before they sinned. He is the only one who can make us Holy. When He gives us a spiritual restoration, He will restore us in other aspects as well. When the prodigal son returned to his father, he was restored all that he had lost.

Zephaniah 3:16-17 (KJ21) - "[16] In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: 'Fear thou not,' and to Zion: 'Let not thine hands be slack. [17] The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.'"

Warned the Nations of God's Universal Judgment

Zephaniah 2:4-5 (KJ21) - "[4] For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up. [5] Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The Word of the Lord is against you: 'O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.'"

Zephaniah 2:13 (KJ21) - "And He will stretch out His hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness."

Zephaniah's prophecies were not limited to Judah and Jerusalem; he also delivered messages of judgment against the nations surrounding Israel. This broader scope reflects his faith in God's sovereignty over all nations and his belief that God's justice would be executed universally.

God’s judgment is universal. He will judge everybody. Since God is fair, before Jesus comes back, He will ensure that the gospel has reached everyone. No one will have an excuse saying that not knowing the truth is what has caused them to be lost. Everyone will have an opportunity to learn the truth. He who is lost will be lost by his own choice. Prophet Zechariah preached of God’s universal judgment without fear. We should emulate his example and preach to everybody, not just Christians alone or people of our denomination alone.

Tell everyone that there is only one God and He is the Creator. Tell everyone about the power of God’s Word. Tell everyone that Jesus is the only one who can save. Tell everyone that we are saved by grace through faith. Tell everyone about the law of God including the Sabbath. Tell everyone about the second coming of Christ. Tell everyone about everything that is written in the Bible.

Zephaniah 3:9 (KJ21) - “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.”

Prophesied the Purification and Elevation of God's People

Zephaniah 3:19-20 (AMP) - “[19] Behold, at that time I am going to deal With all your oppressors; I will save the lame And gather the scattered, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown In every land [where they have suffered]. [20] “At that time I will bring you in, Yes, at the time I gather you together; For I will make you a name and a praise Among all the peoples of the earth When I restore your fortunes [and freedom] before your eyes,” Says the Lord.”

Zephaniah’s faith is further revealed in his prophecies concerning the future purification and elevation of God's people. He foresaw a day when the nations would no longer scorn Israel, but rather, God would exalt His people, and they would live in peace and honor. God promised to deal with all the oppressors of the Israelites. When God restores you, He deals with the people who are oppressing you or who previously oppressed you.

God dealt with the Amalekites many years later after they had oppressed the Israelites. The reason why He took so long to deal with them is because He was giving them time and a chance to repent but they did not. God promised to save those who are lame meaning He would save those who are weak and who cannot do much for themselves.

God loves everyone including those who seem inadequate in ability. He loves those who find it hard to pray and those who do not know how to pray. He loves those who find it hard to read the Bible. He loves those who find it hard to attend church service. He loves those who are always pulling far away from Him. He will do everything to save them, they just need to yield to His control. God promised to gather the scattered. God delights in unity, especially when His children are united (Psalm 133:1).

God also promised to turn their shame into praise and make them to be renown in every land including the lands where they had suffered. When you sin, you bring shame to yourself. When you turn to God, God turns that shame into praise. All the people who were hoping for your doom and downfall will cover their faces when they see how highly God has exalted you.

God will exalt you in the places where they treated you like a slave like He exalted Joseph. Do not be in a rush to uplift yourself in the eyes of those who underrate you. Be humble, God will uplift you in a way that you cannot uplift yourself. Therefore, give your heart to Jesus Christ and let Him take charge.

Proclaimed the Day of the Lord

Zephaniah 1:7 (KJ21) - “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand. For the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath invited His guests.”

Zephaniah’s focus on the “Day of the Lord” shows his deep faith in God's future intervention in human history. He told people to hold their peace in the presence of the Lord God, for the day of the Lord is coming soon. Zephaniah calls for silence and reverence in the face of God's presence

and His coming judgment. It suggests that the time for talking, and excuses is over; people should stand in awe and prepare for what is coming.

The "Day of the Lord" refers to a time of God's decisive intervention in human affairs, often associated with judgment and the establishment of His justice. In this context, it is a day of judgment against Judah and the surrounding nations.

The "sacrifice" here metaphorically represents the judgment that God has prepared. The people who are unfaithful, corrupt, and sinful are being compared to the sacrificial animals that are about to be offered up. The "guests" refer to those who will witness or benefit from the outcome of God's judgment, perhaps indicating that the surrounding nations will observe the downfall of Judah.

Warned Against Complacency

Zephaniah 1:12 (KJ21) - “And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, ‘The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.’”

Zephaniah warned the people against becoming complacent, especially those who thought that God would neither do good nor evil. This warning reflects his faith in God's active involvement in the world and His righteous judgment.

We live in a world where complacency is common. It is quite common in Christian churches today. People delight in sitting on the fence. They want to give their lives to Christ, but they do not want to miss out on the 'fun' that evil promises to offer. Being lukewarm is the same as being fully on the Devil’s side for God wants undivided attention.

Condemned Idolatry

Zephaniah 1:4-5 (KJ21) - “[4] I will also stretch out Mine hand upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests, [5] and those that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops, and those that worship and that swear by the Lord and that swear by Malcham.”

Zephaniah's condemnation of idolatry, especially within Judah, demonstrated his faith in the one true God. He urged the people to turn away from false gods and return to the worship of the Lord, showing his commitment to God's holiness.

Zephaniah condemned idolatry with boldness. In this present age, not many people worship physical idols, but we have various idols which we worship. We have superstars and celebrities that we have placed above God and neglected God's advice by taking their advice. Worship needs to be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Worship that is not in line with truth is not worship directed to the true God.

For example, keeping other days such as Sunday as the Sabbath is idolatry because God has said severally in His Word that the seventh day is the Sabbath. It is not a sin to worship God on Sunday, it is a sin not to keep the Sabbath (Saturday) day holy. Having graven images in the church and worshiping them is idolatry. Therefore, as much as many churches in the world call themselves Christian churches, their practices do not uplift Christ for they do not uplift truth.

"Modern Forms of Idolatry—Many who bear the name of Christians are serving other gods besides the Lord. Our Creator demands our supreme devotion, our first allegiance. Anything which tends to abate our love for God, or to interfere with the service due Him, becomes thereby an idol. With some their lands, their houses, their merchandise, are the idols. Business enterprises are prosecuted with zeal and energy, while the service of God is made a secondary consideration. Family worship is neglected, secret prayer is forgotten. Many claim to deal justly with their fellow men, and seem to feel that in so doing they discharge their whole duty. But it is not enough to keep the last six commandments of the decalogue. We are to love the Lord our God with all the heart. Nothing short of obedience to every precept—nothing less than supreme love to God as well as equal love to our fellow man—can satisfy the claims of the divine law." - SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 2, Page 1011.7, Ellen G. White.

Prophesied the Humbling of the Proud

Zephaniah foretold the humbling of the proud and the arrogant, not only within Israel but among the nations. His emphasis on humility and the downfall of pride underscores his faith in God's opposition to human arrogance and His favor toward the humble.

Zephaniah 2:10-11 (KJ21) - “This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them, for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, everyone from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.”

Pride has painful results. It may feel good for a while but it leads to the degrading of someone’s life. Proverbs 16:18 (KJV) - "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Downfall and destruction follow pride like a whisper carried on the breeze of secrets. Proverbs 18:12 (KJV) - "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility." Humility breeds honor and life.

Proverbs 11:2 (KJV) - "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." Pride brings shame while humility brings wisdom. James 4:6 (KJV) - "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." God resists the proud but gives grace to those who are humble.

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) - "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." We should always have our garments of humility on. Humility puts us in favor with God and man.

Encouraged the Remnant with a Vision of Joy

Zephaniah 3:14-17 (KJ21) - “[14] Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! [15] The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy. The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil anymore. [16] In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Fear thou not,’ and to Zion: ‘Let not thine hands be slack. [17] The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.’”

Zephaniah encouraged the faithful remnant of Judah with a vision of future joy and peace under God's reign. He depicted a time when God Himself would rejoice over His people with singing, showing his faith in God's love and ultimate plan for His people.

Zephaniah encouraged people to sing and rejoice with all their hearts. The reason he gave them is that God had taken away their judgments and cast out their enemy. He told them that they need to rejoice because they shall not see evil anymore. He was speaking of future events when Jesus will come back the second time.

When Jesus comes back the second time, there shall be no evil. Therefore, we shall all rejoice because all our troubles will be over. By faith, we need to start rejoicing now because we have hope that we will surely receive eternal life since God desperately wants to save us.

Proclaimed the Destruction of Jerusalem's Wealth

Zephaniah 1:18 (KJV) - “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”

Zephaniah warned that the wealth and material security of Jerusalem would not save them from God's judgment. His focus on spiritual rather than material wealth reflects his faith in the values of God's kingdom.

Material wealth can do much but not so much. We overrate its power while we underrate God’s power. God is the Creator and Sustainer of everything including all that He has bestowed upon us. Therefore, He can take away what He has given us whenever He pleases. The people of Israel had put so much trust in their silver and gold.

God through prophet Zephaniah told them that their silver and gold would not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath. He told them that the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy.

Another place where we see God’s jealousy being mentioned in the Bible is in the second commandment in Exodus 20:4-6. In that commandment, God commands us not to make graven images and worship them. His jealousy is kindled when we worship other gods beside Him.

God’s jealousy is out of love because He wants us to benefit and when we worship other gods we cannot benefit. This is because He has everything that we need as He is the Creator. When we acknowledge this, we acknowledge that we are totally dependent on Him. The Sabbath

commandment tells us that God (the giver of the commandments) is the Creator (Exodus 20:11) and when we acknowledge that God is the Creator we shall acknowledge that we are totally dependent on Him.

The faith of Prophet Zephaniah is a testament to unwavering trust in God's righteousness, justice, and ultimate plan for His people. Zephaniah boldly proclaimed God's impending judgment on Judah and the surrounding nations, undeterred by the widespread corruption and idolatry of his time. His messages of warning were balanced with a deep hope for restoration, reflecting his belief in God's mercy and the eventual purification of a faithful remnant.

Zephaniah's prophecies, though filled with warnings of destruction, ultimately pointed to a future where God's people would be restored and elevated, living in peace and honor. His steadfast faith in the face of overwhelming challenges serves as a powerful example for believers today, reminding us to trust in God's promises, even when the path ahead seems daunting. Like Zephaniah, we are called to proclaim God's truth boldly, to seek Him with humility, and to hold fast to the hope of His ultimate restoration.

Prayer

My Heavenly Father and Mighty King, I come before You with a heart full of gratitude and humility. I thank You because You have treasured and protected me. Please forgive me for all the wrongs that I have done. Restore what I lost through sin and multiply it. Help me not to be complacent in my faith. Give me the habit of encouraging others. Help us as a remnant to unite in repentance. Purify me and elevate me. Purify and elevate those around me too. Help me to focus on You alone and shift my focus away from other gods. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List the things that God did in your life that made you feel treasured. Thank God for them.
2. List the things that God did in your life that made you feel protected. Thank God for them.
3. Meditate and list the things that you have lost through sin. Ask God to restore them.
4. Pray to God daily and ask Him to help you live sacrificially for Him.

5. Prayerfully find out what you can do to encourage others daily.
6. Pray for your church to unite in repentance.
7. List the things that shift your focus from God, the ones that make you not to have time for God. Pray for God to help you get over them.

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CHAPTER 80

FAITH LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF PROPHET HAGGAI

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God does not dwell in temples made with hands,

But He asked the Israelites to rebuild the Temple with their own hands,

It is for our own good that God makes commands,

If we obey them, He will bless us in the hinterlands and the highlands.

God talked to the Israelites through His servant Haggai the Prophet,

Who delivered His message fast and direct, like an outer space rocket,

The message from the prophet made the Israelites profit,

The message blessed them as they acted on it like a connected socket.

God loves us, so He gives us work to do,

God's work is meant to keep us from feeling sad and blue,

God loves us all, He loves both me and you,

God loves us all; He wants us to love Him too.

God wants us to focus on Him and not on what's inadequate,

If we move by faith, the end results we will appreciate,

When the Israelites built the Temple, God showed them how He operates,

God blessed them, for God cannot fail to compensate.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Hebrews 11:32 talks about the faith of the prophets. Haggai is one of the prophets sent by God to proclaim a message of faith, which yielded marvelous results. The name Haggai means festive. The book of Haggai was set in the Persian Empire during the late 6th century B.C., around 520-518 BC.

The Babylonian Empire, which had previously conquered and exiled the people of Judah, was replaced by the Persian Empire under King Cyrus the Great. Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. This marked the beginning of the Persian or Second Temple period. Many Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, including Zerubbabel, a governor, and Joshua, the high priest.

One of the central themes of the Book of Haggai is the reconstruction of the Second Temple. The returning exiles initially faced opposition, financial difficulties, and a lack of motivation to rebuild the Temple, leading to a delay in the project.

Haggai is a prophet who was active during this period. His prophetic ministry is instrumental in motivating the people to complete the construction of the Temple. He delivers a series of messages from God, emphasizing the need to prioritize rebuilding the Temple and the consequences of neglecting it.

Haggai's prophecies encourage the people to renew their commitment to God and His house. He assures the people that God is with them and will bless them if they obey His command to rebuild the Temple.

The Book of Haggai closes with the people's renewed dedication to the task, and they complete the construction of the Second Temple. The dedication of the Temple is a significant event in the history of Israel and the restoration of their religious and national identity.

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Call to Rebuild the Temple

Haggai 1:2 (KJV) – “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.”

The people said the time to rebuild the Temple had not yet come. Why did they say this?

Waiting for the 'Perfect' Moment

In this imperfect world, we should keep moving on God's mission despite imperfections. As we progress, we can perfect the conditions step by step. Waiting for the perfect time has caused many people to delay their God-given purpose. Unfortunately, some have lived their entire lives waiting for the perfect moment which has never come. My friend Dan Onsare told me, "If you don't have what it takes to be, use what you have to make it be."

You may have a few things to do what you want at the beginning. No matter your how dire your situation is, there will always be things at your disposal to embark on your journey. Satan took everything from Job, but he did not take away the ability to pray and praise God from him, and he did not kill Job.

Job used his ability to pray. He prayed for his friends. As a result, God turned away his captivity (Job 42:10). Joseph's freedom was taken away when he was imprisoned in Egypt, but his gift of interpreting dreams was not taken away. Therefore, he was able to use it excellently when he was behind bars. As a result of the excellent use of his gift and the grace of God, Pharaoh released him from prison and made him the highest person in Egypt; only Pharaoh was more elevated than him (Genesis 41:41-45).

You may not have the needed resources to build a church, but you may have the ability to network and mobilize people to come together and build God's house. Use that ability while putting God at the center of your plans, and God will bring success. There is always something you can do.

You may be an upcoming gospel musician, but you do not have money to produce and market your music. Start where you are. Begin composing songs and performing them where possible. As you move, God will keep on opening up new ways. You may have a big vision for your business and need more money to execute it. Start with what you have. You can start creating business and marketing plans, which require no money.

Building the Temple Was Neither Urgent nor Important to Them

If something is essential and urgent to us, we will try our best to do it. For example, food is vital to us. Therefore, we work so hard to ensure that we have food on the table. Shelter is necessary for

us. Consequently, we work hard to ensure that we have money to pay rent or to buy or build a house to have a roof over our heads.

Companies and Organizations will only purchase something that is an immediate need. In sales and marketing, you are told to structure your product and make it appear urgent and important before the eyes of the prospective buyer. Sales and marketing tutors teach you that your target client is the person who needs that product the most.

The Israelites might have seen the work of building the Temple as not urgent work. They were coming from captivity and may have faced challenges in settling down. They may not have been financially stable, and their primary focus was to sustain themselves. What they forgot and what we tend to forget as Christians is that God is the One responsible for our sustenance and maintenance.

Matthew 6:25-34 (KJV) – "[25] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? [26] Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [27] Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? [28] And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30] Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? [31] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. [33] But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [34] Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

When we seek the Kingdom of God first, everything else will fall into place. Our most urgent desire should be to develop a relationship with God and not to meet our basic needs. If we put God first and live by faith, God will provide for us our basic needs. He will pour out a blessing that we have no room to receive (Malachi 3:10).

"Christ sought to draw the attention of His disciples away from the artificial to the natural: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Why did not our heavenly Father carpet the earth with brown or gray? He chose the color that was most restful, the most acceptable to the senses. How it cheers the heart and refreshes the weary spirit to look upon the earth, clad in its garments of living green! Without this covering the air would be filled with dust, and the earth would appear like a desert. Every spire of grass, every opening bud and blooming flower is a token of God's love, and should teach us a lesson of faith and trust in Him." – SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 5, Page 1087.3, Ellen G. White.

Lack of 'Adequate' Resources

They probably feared the work that would take to rebuild the Temple and the resources that the work of building the second Temple would consume. This fear they might have had is a lack of faith as it is caused by doubt in God's Word. God owns resources (Psalms 24:1).

Our focus should not be on what we do not have. Instead, it should be on what God has. If we believe and acknowledge that God owns everything, we will fearlessly take great strides in accomplishing the mission that He has told us. I have seen countless times in church, on big church projects and departmental programs; when people begin working, the resources available are often inadequate.

However, despite these insufficient resources, God provides that the projects and the programs eventually come to completion. God is responsible for finishing His work. Therefore, when He calls us to do something, we should trust that He will cause the work He has given us to succeed.

Haggai 1:3-4 (KJV) – "[3] Then came the Word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, [4] Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"

Haggai's message highlights the imbalance in the people's priorities. They were more focused on their personal comfort and prosperity, as reflected in their well-appointed houses, while the house of God remained neglected. This neglect was not due to a lack of resources or ability but rather a lack of motivation and commitment on the part of the people.

The message goes beyond physical construction and touches on the spiritual dimension. The neglected Temple represented a disregard for their spiritual relationship with God and their communal worship. By focusing on their own houses, they neglected God's house. They were essentially placing their desires and comforts above their devotion to God.

Haggai's message is a call to action, encouraging the people to reconsider their priorities and take steps to rebuild the Temple. It implies that they should redirect their efforts and resources toward restoring the Lord's house, acknowledging the need to honor God and fulfill their spiritual responsibilities.

Through Prophet Haggai, God questioned the Israelites why they had built their houses but did not build God's house. A good shelter for themselves and their families was more important to them than God's house. They lacked the money to build God's house but had the resources to make their own homes.

They procrastinated on building the Temple but could not procrastinate on building their homes. This is the case with most Christians. We often take our affairs to be of greater significance than God's affairs. Some people say they have been unable to return tithe because the money they received is too little and could barely meet their needs. Others cannot find time to keep the Sabbath because they are busy working on Saturdays to make a living.

Hebrews 10:38 (KJV) – "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." 2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV) – "For we walk by faith, not by sight." God has created us to live by faith. A righteous (just) man should live by faith. Many Christians attempt to live by sight and not by faith. We often depend on our senses for guidance on our actions. God created the senses. He made the reasoning capacity and mental judgment. However, faith in God should be placed above all these senses because we should focus on the Creator, not the creature.

Because we do not live by faith, we put other people and things before God. Those employed place their bosses before God, and those who have their own businesses place their clients before God. Doing this robs God of the opportunity to reward them as He had planned.

If our bosses or clients tell us to work on the Sabbath, we quickly obey them. We do that because we are afraid to lose our jobs and/or our most esteemed clients. God has told us to work six days

a week (from Sunday to Friday) and rest on the seventh (Saturday). We work seven days continually without rest to earn an extra income.

Are those who work seven days a week instead of six more successful than the rest of the population? Are those who don't return tithe and choose to invest all the money they have gotten in other ventures more successful than those who do?

The answer lies in Haggai 1:5-6.

Haggai 1:5-6 (KJV) – "[5] Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. [6] Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

When we disobey God's commandments, such shall be our fate. We shall sow many seeds but harvest extraordinarily little. But if God is on our side, we shall plant little and gather much.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (AMP) – "[6] I planted, Apollos watered, but God [all the while] was causing the growth. [7] So neither is the one who plants nor the one who waters anything, but [only] God who causes the growth."

It is our work to put maximum effort, but it is God's work to bring growth. Science cannot fully explain the process of germination and childbirth because God is responsible for those procedures.

What should we do to ensure our maximum effort has yielded excellent results?

"To every man is given "his work" (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God." – Education, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

"Thus our business or calling is a part of God's great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, He Himself is responsible for the results. "Laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9), our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God. The Word that fed Israel in the desert, and sustained Elijah through the time of famine, has the same power today. "Be not therefore anxious (R.V.),

saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? … Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:31-33." – Education, Page 138.2, Ellen G. White.

When we depend on our efforts, we will not gain much, but when God is responsible for the results, we are assured of positive, humongous outcomes because He is an enormous God. We are assured of infinite results because He is an infinite God. Some Billionaires worldwide have dedicated all their time and effort to their businesses. Thus, they have made billions of dollars and built large multinational corporations.

Unfortunately, this massive accumulation of wealth has come at the expense of their families, as we have seen some end up in divorce. Some of them have gained wealth in exchange for their health. Therefore, they cannot enjoy the vast chunks of money they have gotten.

Unfortunately, some have acquired wealth in exchange for their spiritual lives. Consequently, they cannot find peace and joy because true peace and happiness can only be found in God. Mark 8:36-37 (KJV) – "[36] For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? [37] Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Does this mean that we should be lazy? Not at all. We should put in our best effort. Our best effort is best when it is in line with God's commandments.

"Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. (Haggai 1:6)" This meant they were not satisfied with what they got. Since God was not at the center of their efforts, their efforts resulted in more greed and emptiness. They made money but were not satisfied with the money they made.

They thought satisfaction will come from making more money; thus, they worked harder to make more money. If they knew, they would have sought God because only God can give you satisfaction. If we don't put God in our efforts, it will lead to more greed. As a result, we will be more corrupt, which leads to a lack of peace of mind and an accumulation of enemies.

Haggai 1:6 extends this theme to their clothing. Despite having garments, they are not warm. This condition could be both a physical and metaphorical coldness. Physically, it could indicate their clothing is inadequate for comfort and protection.

Metaphorically, it may signify a lack of warmth in their lives, suggesting a spiritual emptiness and a lack of genuine contentment. The passage mentions that those who earn wages are putting their earnings into a bag with holes. This imagery vividly conveys a sense of financial futility. It's as if their hard-earned money disappears without providing any lasting benefit or security.

Haggai 1:5-6 serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of misplaced priorities and a lack of faith in God. The people's material pursuits and self-reliance have yet to yield the expected results, leaving them unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and struggling in various aspects of their lives.

God's message through Haggai encourages them to reconsider their ways and realign their focus on Him, emphasizing that true abundance and satisfaction come from a faithful and obedient relationship with God.

After God tells them the negative things that have befallen them, He tells them what to do to turn around their situation.

What does He tell them?

Haggai 1:7-11 (KJV) – "[7] Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. [8] Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. [9] Ye looked for much, and, lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. [10] Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. [11] And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."

In Haggai 1:7-11, God gives the Israelites the key to turn around their depraved situation and make it noble. He tells them to build Him a house. Someone reading this may be facing hard-hitting circumstances, and through this writing, God might be telling them how to turn around that challenging situation.

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Response of the People and Leaders

Haggai 1:12-15 (KJV) – "[12] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord. [13] Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. [14] And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, [15] In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king."

The people of Israel heeded to God's Word. They obeyed God and built Him a house. Faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). They hoped for a better life. Therefore, they sought it with faithful actions to God by building Him a temple. Their hope was revived because they accompanied it with substance (actions).

They united with their leaders, such as Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest. If they had not done that, God would not have forced them. God commanded them to build the Temple for their benefit, not for His good because He does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24). Each action of faith we do is meant to benefit us, not God.

Haggai 2:1-3 (KJV) – "[1] In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the Word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, [2] Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, [3] Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"

God was pleased by their work. He told them to compare how it was before to the current state. In other words, He showed them the results of their faith in Him.

Haggai 2:1-3 marks a significant moment in the journey of the Israelites as they undertake the monumental task of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. It's a time when the Word of the Lord comes through the prophet Haggai, addressing not only the leaders like Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, but also the entire community of believers.

In these verses, God's message carries a powerful invitation to reflect on their progress. He prompts them to consider the Temple's current state compared to its former glory. This moment of reflection serves as a reminder of the transformation that faith and commitment have brought about.

The people who had witnessed the Temple in its original splendor would have remembered its grandeur, which was unmatched. The original Temple built by Solomon was a magnificent structure adorned with precious materials and dedicated to the worship of God. In contrast, while meaningful and essential, the new Temple might have seemed meager and modest.

God's purpose in asking this question isn't to discourage or belittle their efforts. Instead, it's a call to recognize and appreciate the progress they've made through faith and obedience. He invites them to see that their commitment to rebuilding the Temple, despite its current state, is a testament to their faith and dedication to Him. This message underscores the idea that faith is not always about achieving immediate perfection but the journey and growth process.

The comparison between the former and current state of the Temple serves as a reminder that God acknowledges and appreciates their faith, hard work, and the progress they've achieved. It's a reminder that God values the willingness of His people to take steps of faith and obedience even when the outcome doesn't immediately match the glory of the past.

This message from Haggai carries a timeless lesson for believers. It encourages us to focus on the faith journey and not be disheartened by apparent disparities between our current state and past glory. It emphasizes that God recognizes our efforts and the steps we take in faith and is pleased by our commitment to His work.

As we reflect on God's Word in the book of Haggai, we are reminded that our faith journey is a process, and God values our steadfast commitment and dedication, even when the results may not match past glories. It's a call to persevere in faith, trusting that God is pleased by our progress and will continue to work with us, transforming our efforts into something meaningful and beautiful in His sight.

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God's Promise

Haggai 2:4-9 (KJV) – "[4] Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: [5] According to the Word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. [6] For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; [7] And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. [8] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. [9] The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

God promised them that He would always be with them and to bless that Temple and fill it with splendor. God loves when people gather together to worship Him. The people would have worshipped God at home, but God told them to build a temple. Not only did He want them to fellowship together, but He also wanted them to unite with Him in doing His work. Thus giving them the privilege of taking part in constructing the Temple.

Whatever work God gives us to do is a privilege. He is omnipotent; He can do all the work alone, but the Lord God does not do that because He wants us to get blessings from conducting His work. God created the animals. He could have named them, but He allowed Adam to name them.

God is not selfish. He gives us opportunities to work for Him and with Him so that we can share in His glorious riches. Some of these opportunities for blessings come disguised in challenging work. Therefore, we fear partaking in them. When faced with such, we should not worry. Instead, we should do the work step by step, bit by bit, and portion by portion. If we do that, we will realize we have eventually finished the entire work.

Haggai 2:17-19 (KJV) – "[17] I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. [18] Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid, consider it. [19] Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you."

God promised the Israelites to bless them from that day because they obeyed His command and built a temple. He promised them that He would cause all their trees that have not yet borne fruit to bear fruit. Obeying God turns fruitlessness into fruitfulness.

John 15:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." On our own, we cannot bear fruit. We need God to bear good fruit.

"Our first and highest duty is to know that we are abiding in Christ. He must do the work. We are to seek to know "What saith the Lord," yielding our lives to His guidance. When we have the Spirit of an abiding Christ, everything will take on a changed aspect. The Saviour alone can give us the rest and peace we so much need. And, in every invitation He gives us to seek the Lord that He may be found of us, He is calling us to abide in Him. This is an invitation, not merely to come to Him, but to remain in Him. It is the Spirit of God that moves us to come. When we have this rest and peace, our daily worries will not lead us to be coarse and rough and uncourteous. We shall no longer follow our own way and will. We will want to do the will of God, abiding in Christ as the branches in the vine." – This Day With God, Page 140, Ellen G. White.

Haggai 2:17-19 offers a profound message about God's response to the actions of the Israelites and their renewed commitment to rebuilding the Temple. In these verses, God vividly recounts the challenges and hardships that the people faced—blasting, mildew, hail, and difficulties in their labor. Despite these difficulties, the people did not turn back to God, remaining steadfast in their mission to reconstruct the sacred Temple.

It's essential to understand that these hardships are portrayed as divine chastisement. God's actions were meant to get the people's attention, to prompt them to reevaluate their ways and turn towards Him. However, their continued perseverance in the face of adversity revealed their unwavering commitment to God's work. They remained focused on constructing the Temple, emphasizing their resolve to prioritize their faith and God's command.

God's promise, delivered through Haggai, conveys hope and transformation. He instructs the people to consider their circumstances from the day the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid,

marking a significant turning point in their journey. This moment signifies the point at which they recommitted themselves to God's work and began the construction of the Temple in earnest.

The promise of fruitfulness and blessings is a powerful reminder of the impact of obedience to God's commands. The analogy of fruit-bearing is used throughout the Bible to illustrate the connection between faith and action. In John 15:4-5, Jesus teaches that we, like branches, can only bear good fruit when we remain connected to Him, the vine. Our efforts alone are insufficient; we require God's guidance and divine intervention to achieve true success.

In Haggai's context, God's promise to bless the Israelites from that day forward is a testament to the transformative power of faith and obedience. By prioritizing the reconstruction of the Temple and putting their trust in God, they shifted from a period of difficulty and fruitlessness to a season of divine blessings and productivity.

This message is relevant to believers today, emphasizing the importance of unwavering faith and commitment to God's work, even in the face of challenges. It serves as a reminder that obedience to God's commands can turn barren circumstances into fertile ground for blessings. Just as the Israelites experienced a turnaround in their fortunes, so too can individuals and communities today, through their dedication to God and His divine guidance, witness a transformation from fruitlessness to abundant blessings.

"The Circulation of Life—Christ alone can help us and give us the victory. Christ must be all in all to us, He must dwell in the heart, His life must circulate through us as the blood circulates through the veins. His spirit must be a vitalizing power that will cause us to influence others to become Christlike and holy."- Letter 43, 1895, Ellen G. White.

"A Day by Day Experience—[John 15:8 quoted] What is it to bear fruit? It is not all comprised in coming to meeting once a week, and bearing our testimony in prayer or social meeting. We are to be found day by day abiding in the Vine, and bringing forth fruit, with patience, at our home, in our business; and in every relation in life manifesting the Spirit of Christ. There are many who act as though they thought an occasional connection with Christ was all that was necessary, and that they can be accounted living branches because at times they make confession of Christ. But this is a fallacy. The branch is to be grafted into the Vine, and to abide there, uniting itself to the Vine fiber by fiber, drawing its daily supply of sap and nourishment from the root and fatness of the

Vine, until it becomes one with the parent stock. The sap that nourishes the Vine must nourish the branch and this will be evident in the life of him who is abiding in Christ; for the joy of Christ will be fulfilled in him who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." – SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 5, Page 1144.5, Ellen G. White.

"Our professions are worthless unless we abide in Christ; for we cannot be living branches unless the vital qualities of the Vine abound in us. In the genuine Christian, the characteristics of his Master will appear, and when we reflect the graces of Christ in our lives and characters, the Father loves us as He loves His Son. When this condition is fulfilled in those who profess to believe the present truth, we shall see a prosperous church; for its members will not live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and they will be flourishing branches of the living Vine." – The Signs of the Times, April 18, 1892, Ellen G. White.

Haggai 2:20-23 (KJV) – "[20] And again the Word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, [21] Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; [22] And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother. [23] In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

Haggai 2:20-23 is a message from God to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, in the context of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. The message conveys God's intention to bring about significant changes in the world, overthrow kingdoms, and establish Zerubbabel in a substantial and blessed position, symbolized by being made as a "signet," representing God's special favor and choice. The passage speaks of divine intervention and the ultimate authority of God in the affairs of nations and individuals.

God conveys His profound intentions to Zerubbabel, emphasizing His divine purpose and sovereign authority over worldly affairs. It's essential to recognize that Zerubbabel is not merely a political leader but is deeply intertwined with the spiritual restoration of Israel. His role as the governor signifies his leadership in governing the land and overseeing the nation's spiritual and religious revival.

The passage is charged with a sense of imminent transformation and divine intervention. God speaks of “shaking the heavens and the earth,” which is a powerful metaphor for initiating profound change on a global scale. This upheaval includes the overthrow of kingdoms, the destruction of the strength of heathen nations, and the dismantling of chariots and their riders.

These vivid images underscore the idea that God’s ultimate authority extends far beyond human rulers and their earthly empires. He is the one who can reshape the course of nations and bring about significant, world-altering events.

Furthermore, the imagery of Zerubbabel being made as a “signet” carries deep symbolism. In ancient times, a signet ring symbolized authority, trust, and honor. It was used to seal documents and make significant decisions.

God bestows him a special status and divine favor by likening Zerubbabel to a signet. This signifies that Zerubbabel will play a pivotal role in God’s unfolding plan for Israel and the world. It’s a testament to God’s chosen servant, emphasizing that God Himself ordains Zerubbabel’s leadership.

In essence, Haggai 2:20-23 underscores the overarching theme of the book of Haggai – the recommitment of the Jewish people to their faith and the reconstruction of the Temple. It reveals that this seemingly local and temporal effort is part of a much larger, divine plan.

God’s message to Zerubbabel is a powerful reminder that, ultimately, it is God’s will and divine authority that governs the destinies of nations and individuals. Through these verses, God conveys His intention to bring about a transformation in Jerusalem and globally, establishing His chosen leader, Zerubbabel, as a symbol of His divine guidance and favor. This passage serves as a testament to God’s limitless power and authority in shaping the course of history and the affairs of humanity.

In conclusion, the book of Haggai offers valuable faith lessons that continue to be relevant to believers today. It demonstrates the importance of prioritizing God’s work, even when faced with challenges and limited resources.

Through their obedience and faith, the Israelites experienced the transformation of their circumstances. They learned that their true satisfaction and blessings come from aligning their

efforts with God's will and building His Temple, symbolizing their commitment to His worship and service.

God's promises in Haggai 2:4-9 remind us that when we put our trust in Him and actively participate in His work, He blesses us abundantly. The passage emphasizes that God's presence and favor accompany those who remain faithful and obedient. Furthermore, Haggai's message to Zerubbabel in the final verses reaffirms the power and authority of God to shape the destinies of nations and individuals.

Ultimately, the book of Haggai inspires believers to live by faith, not by sight, and to seek God's kingdom first, trusting that He will provide for all their needs. It teaches us that faith, combined with action and commitment to God's work, can lead to blessings, transformation, and fulfillment of God's promises in our lives.

"To His children today the Lord declares, "Be strong, … and work: for I am with you." The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them. They would acknowledge Him as their wisdom and efficiency, and He would bring to pass that which He desires to work out through them." – Prophets and Kings, Page 576.1, Ellen G. White.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We seek Your wisdom and strength as we explore the faith lessons from the Book of Haggai. Help us learn to prioritize Your work, trust in Your provision, and take action even in imperfect conditions. Teach us to live by faith and seek Your kingdom first.

May we unite in purpose and cooperation, recognizing the privilege of serving You. We thank You for the promise of Your presence and blessings, transforming our lives.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

1. **Reflect on Your Priorities:** Take a few minutes to reflect on your current priorities in life. What are the most important aspects of your life right now? Make a list of the top three to five priorities.
2. **Compare with the Lessons:** Compare your priorities with the lessons from the essay. Are you putting God and His work at the center of your life, or have other things taken precedence? Reflect on how you can align your priorities more closely with the lessons from the Book of Haggai.
3. **Set Actionable Goals:** Identify at least one concrete action to shift your priorities in line with your faith and the lessons discussed in the essay. This might involve dedicating more time to spiritual activities, volunteering for a cause, or helping those in need.
4. **Accountability:** Share your insights and the action you plan to take with a trusted friend or family member. Ask them to hold you accountable and support your efforts to live out the lessons of faith from Haggai.

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CHAPTER 81

THE FAITH OF PROPHET ZECHARIAH

Zechariah saw beyond the gloom,

For he opened his heart and gave God room,

Sing and rejoice, dry your tears, don't cry,

God is with you, nearer than nigh.

A plumbline hung in God's hand,

To measure faith upon the land,

The plumbline from God, divine and straight,

Have faith and your path will lead to great.

Who despises the day of small things?

The Lord of Hosts His promise brings,

The Lord of lords, the King of kings,

Have faith and fly without wings,

Have faith and drink from the freshest springs.

With eyes that pierced beyond the veil,

Zechariah's faith in God did not fail,

He bore God's love, proclaimed a message so strong,

By faith, he clung to God and saw redemption's throne.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) - ”[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Background and History of Prophet Zechariah

Prophet Zechariah was one of the post-exilic prophets, meaning he prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile. He ministered during the same period as Haggai, around 520-518 B.C. His prophecies primarily focused on the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the spiritual renewal of the people.

The name Zechariah (,זְכַרְיָה "Zekaryah" in Hebrew) means "Yahweh has remembered" or "the Lord remembers." This meaning is significant as it reflects the overarching theme of Zechariah's message: God's remembrance of His covenant with His people and His promises of restoration. Zechariah was likely born in Babylon and returned to Judah with the group of exiles led by Zerubbabel. He was a priest as well as a prophet, coming from a priestly lineage.

Zechariah's prophecies are filled with visions, symbols, and apocalyptic imagery. His book contains encouragement to rebuild the Temple and return to God, warnings against disobedience, and vivid portrayals of the coming Messianic age. Zechariah's prophecies have a strong Messianic focus. He foretold the coming of a king who would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), which Jesus Christ fulfilled in His first coming.

Zechariah encouraged the people of Judah to trust in God's power to protect them from surrounding enemies, rather than relying on political alliances or military strength. This trust in God's sovereignty is a form of subduing kingdoms through faith. Zechariah's prophecies of restoration and a coming Messiah are examples of obtaining promises by faith. He assured the people that God's promises to restore Israel and bring forth a righteous ruler would be fulfilled. Zechariah

called the people to repentance and righteousness, urging them to turn back to God and rebuild their spiritual lives as they rebuilt the Temple.

Zechariah's Calling

Zechariah 1:1 (KJ21) - "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the Word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying..."

The name Berechiah is derived from the Hebrew words "בָּרַךְ" (barak), meaning "to bless," and "יָהּ" (Yah), which is a shortened form of "Yahweh," the name of God in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, Berechiah (בְּרֶכְיָה) means "Yahweh blesses" or "Blessed by the Lord." The name Iddo is derived from the Hebrew root "עֵד" (*ed*), meaning "witness" or "testimony." It can also relate to the concept of an appointed time, linking to a divine purpose or mission. Iddo (עִדּוֹ) MEANS "His witness" or "Appointed time."

Zechariah came from a prophetic lineage as his grandfather Iddo was a prophet. You can follow the footsteps of your family members in serving God. Not much is known about Iddo as is known about Zechariah. We do not know of a book that Iddo has written but we know of a book that Zechariah has written.

Who is your role model or mentor? Whoever it is, you need to challenge yourself to do more than them. You need to have a wider influence than them, especially if they worked before you. This is because you have more access to the truth than them. For example, people who lived in the 1950s and 1960s did not have access to the internet. Therefore, it was not easy for them to access much information. They had to buy books which were quite costly to access the information that we can easily find now. In this age, we have access to the internet. We can access so much beneficial information for free if one has bandwidth.

People living before 2015 did not have access to AI tools such as ChatGPT but now we do. Therefore, technology has made research easier. It will be an act of injustice to yourself and to your lineage if you fail to make it beyond the achievements that your father or grandfather or anyone in your lineage has.

Zechariah responded to God’s call to encourage and guide the people of Israel in rebuilding the temple and renewing their covenant with God. He did not know of the profound influence that he was going to have as we read his book to this day. Like Zechariah, follow your calling, you do not know the influence you are going to have.

Calling the People to Repentance

Zechariah 1:3 (KJ21) - "Therefore say thou unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Turn ye unto Me,’ saith the Lord of hosts, ‘and I will turn unto you,’ saith the Lord of hosts."

Zechariah urged the people to turn back to God, showing his faith in God's mercy and justice. Repentance is turning away from sin and turning towards God's righteousness. Righteousness is from God, and it belongs to God. We cannot have our own righteousness. Since it belongs to God, God is the only one who can give us that righteousness. The beauty about it is that it is God's will for us to possess His righteousness and if we ask Him in prayer, He will surely give it to us.

Sin brings all sorts of problems in our lives, but righteousness brings infinite blessings including infinite life. God wants us to turn away from sin because He wants us to turn away from our problems. God wants us to turn to righteousness so that we can access the divine blessings that righteousness offers. It is like some of us love facing problems, that is why we cling to sin. Like in the days of Zechariah, God is bidding us to turn to Him and when we turn to Him, He will turn to us.

Encouraging the Rebuilding of the Temple

Zechariah 4:8-9 (KJ21) - “[8] Moreover the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [9] “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it. And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.”

Zechariah supported the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, believing that God's presence would return to His people.

The name Zerubbabel (Hebrew: זְרֻבָּבֶל Zerubbavel) is believed to mean "seed of Babylon" or "born in Babylon." "Zera" (זֶרַע) means "seed," and "Bavel" (בָּבֶל) refers to "Babylon." This name reflects the circumstances of his birth, indicating that Zerubbabel was born during the Jewish exile in Babylon. Despite being born in captivity, his role in leading the people back to Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple highlights the fulfillment of God's promise to restore His people and their worship.

Zerubbabel was a significant figure in the history of Israel, particularly during the period of the return from Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Zerubbabel was a descendant of King David, making him part of the royal line of Judah. He was the grandson of Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah), the penultimate king of Judah before the Babylonian exile.

Zerubbabel served as the governor of Judah under the Persian king Darius I. His leadership was crucial in the efforts to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem after the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile. He worked alongside Joshua the High Priest and the prophet Haggai, who encouraged the people in their work.

Zerubbabel is often seen as a symbol of hope and renewal for the Jewish people. His leadership in laying the foundation and overseeing the completion of the Second Temple represented the re-establishment of worship and the restoration of the community's spiritual life. Zerubbabel is sometimes seen as a type or foreshadowing of the Messiah, especially in passages like Zechariah 4, where his work is linked to God's purposes and the promise of divine support.

Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the temple. Not only did he do that, but he also finished it. How did he do it? Zechariah 1:6 (KJ21) - "But My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, 'As the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us.'"

Zerubbabel did not do it by his might or his power, he did it through the Spirit of God. When you are embarking on an assignment, put God first and ask Him to give you His Spirit so that you can carry out that assignment. If you are finding it difficult to complete a project, involve God. Pray, ask someone to pray for you, fast and God will help you through to completion.

When authoring this book, I was stuck when I had reached 75% progress. I was finding it hard to go beyond the three-quarter mark. I prayed and even asked some people to help me pray about it. When I did that, I started seeing progress. As I write this, 90% is finished. Before Zerubbabel, the lofty mountain would become a plain (Zechariah 1:7).

“Throughout the history of God's people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of a living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of an unfaltering trust. It is thus that the soul becomes a conquering power. Before the demand of faith, the obstacles placed by Satan across the pathway of the Christian will disappear; for the powers of heaven will come to his aid. “Nothing shall be impossible unto you.” Matthew 17:20.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 594.3, Ellen G. White.

When the Spirit of God is in you, it makes you do things that no human has ever done. The Spirit of God in you makes the difficult easy. Imagine a whole mountain becoming a plain. It is something that has never happened. What has never happened can happen through you when the Spirit of God is in you.

Vision of the High Priest and the Branch

Zechariah 3:8 (KJ21) - "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at. For behold, I will bring forth My Servant, the Branch."

Zechariah received and shared a vision of the high priest Joshua being cleansed and the coming of the Messiah, referred to as the Branch, demonstrating his faith in God's plan for salvation.

Joshua (Yeshua) the High Priest in this vision represents the spiritual leadership of Israel. In the broader context of Zechariah 3, Joshua is seen standing before the Lord, with Satan accusing him,

and God intervening to cleanse and restore him. Joshua's role as the High Priest symbolizes the restoration and purification of the priesthood and, by extension, the nation of Israel.

The "fellows" likely refer to other priests or leaders in Israel who, like Joshua, are serving in God's presence. They are described as "men wondered at," meaning they are signs or symbols—people set apart by God to represent something greater. "Men Wondered At": This phrase suggests that Joshua and his companions are symbolic figures, serving as a sign or foreshadowing of greater things to come. Their lives and roles are meant to point to God's redemptive work in Israel and the coming of the Messiah.

The most significant part of this verse is the reference to "My Servant, the Branch." "My Servant" is a title often used in the Old Testament to refer to the Messiah, the chosen one of God who would fulfill His purposes on earth. This Servant is depicted as obedient, humble, and suffering for the sake of others (as seen in Isaiah's "Servant Songs").

"The Branch" (Hebrew: "צֶמַח" – Tsemach) is a messianic title that appears in other prophetic writings, including Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5-6, and Zechariah 6:12. The Branch symbolizes new growth or a sprout from the line of David, indicating the coming of a king who would restore Israel and establish God’s Kingdom on earth. The Branch is often understood as a reference to Jesus Christ, representing His role as the Messiah who would bring salvation and righteousness.

This vision in Zechariah 3:8 points to God's plan of redemption and restoration for Israel, culminating in the coming of the Messiah, represented by "My Servant, the Branch." Joshua the High Priest and his companions are symbols of this coming salvation, as they represent the purification and renewal of God's people. The Branch is the future hope, the Messiah, who will establish God's kingdom and bring ultimate deliverance.

Prophesying the Coming of the Messiah

Zechariah 9:9 (KJ21) - "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

“The way of the world is to begin with pomp and boasting. God's way is to make the day of small things the beginning of the glorious triumph of truth and righteousness. Sometimes He trains His workers by bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure. It is His purpose that they shall learn to master difficulties.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 595.1, Ellen G. White.

Zechariah’s prophecies included clear references to the coming of the Messiah, reflecting his deep faith in God's redemptive plan. The people who were expecting the Messiah to come as a high and outwardly royal king did not hear or read Prophet Zechariah’s prophecies. Prophet Zechariah prophesied that Jesus was going to come as a lowly person, not riding upon a horse with chariots but riding upon a donkey. It is dangerous not to go to church and not to attend the Bible study sessions that you ought to attend. It is dangerous not to take time to study the Bible. When you don’t take time to study the Bible, you put yourself in darkness.

Not knowing what the Word of God says leads to confusion. It leads to wrong expectations as the people who were expecting Jesus to come with royal robes. The prophecy of the coming of the Messiah is not hidden in symbolic language. It is plain and clear. There are many things in the Bible which are made plain that people do not know because they do not read it. For example, the Sabbath is the Seventh day of the week.

Proclaiming God’s Future Kingdom

Zechariah 14:9 (KJ21) - "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one."

Zechariah prophesied about the future kingdom of God, showing his faith in God’s ultimate victory and the establishment of His reign on earth. An end to all other gods will come, for God will destroy all other gods. Zechariah prophesied this. He prophesied the second coming of Christ, and not the first coming alone. When Jesus comes the second time, He will put an end to sin. All evil will be done away with, and we will be clothed in new garments of His righteousness. We will have new physical bodies, and we will enjoy a glorious life which is now difficult to imagine.

Revelation 22:14 (KJ21) - "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Vision of the Four Chariots

Zechariah 6:1-5 (KJ21) - "[1] And I turned and lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. [2] In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses, [3] and in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grizzled and bay horses. [4] Then I answered and said unto the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' [5] And the angel answered and said unto me, 'These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.'"

Zechariah received a vision of four chariots coming out from between two mountains, symbolizing God's sovereign control over the nations and His judgment. Zechariah's acceptance and sharing of this vision prove his faith in God's ultimate authority over the world.

Promoting Social Justice

Zechariah 7:9-10 (KJ21) - "[9] Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, 'Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother. [10] And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.'"

Zechariah emphasized the importance of justice, mercy, and compassion in the lives of God's people, reflecting his faith in God's righteous character and God's desire for His people to live justly. Zechariah promoted social justice. Not only did he promote actions of justice. He also promoted thoughts of justice. He said let no one imagine evil against their brothers in their hearts. Justice needs to start in the heart. Are your thoughts towards your neighbor pure? When your thoughts towards your neighbor are pure then your actions will be pure. If people had pure motives towards each other, they would not face most of the problems they face in friendships and relationships.

Exodus 31:13 (KJ21) - "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, ‘Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord who doth sanctify you.’"

It is God alone who can make your thoughts pure. The Sabbath points us to God as the purifier.

Vision of the Golden Lampstand and Olive Trees

Zechariah 4:2-6 (KJ21) - "[2] And said unto me, 'What seest thou?' And I said, 'I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top thereof, [3] and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.' [4] So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, 'What are these, my lord?' [5] Then the angel who talked with me answered and said unto me, 'Knowest thou not what these be?' And I said, 'No, my lord.' [6] Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, 'This is the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying: Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.'"

“Often men are tempted to falter before the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make the way clear. Success will come to them as they struggle against difficulties. Before the intrepid spirit and unwavering faith of a Zerubbabel, great mountains of difficulty will become a plain; and he whose hands have laid the foundation, even “his hands shall also finish it.” “He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” Zechariah 4:9, 7.“ - Prophets and Kings, Page 595.2, Ellen G. White.

An angel of God came to Zechariah and woke him as a man is awakened from his sleep (Zechariah 4:1). The verse does not say that Zechariah was literally sleeping. It says that he was woken up as if he was literally sleeping. This means that the waking here does not refer to the literal awakening from physical sleeping.

Zechariah is aroused from a state of spiritual or prophetic slumber by an angel to receive further revelation. There are many people in this world who seem awake, but they are sleeping with their eyes wide open. They are working in their jobs and earning a living from a state of spiritual slumber. That is why many people are not as productive as they ought to be because you cannot be physically productive when you are drowsy (spiritually).

The best awakening that is needed by all but neglected by most is spiritual awakening. Luke 15:17 (AMP) - "Then when he [finally] came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough food, while I am dying here of hunger!’" When the prodigal son came to his senses, he reasoned out correctly. He realized that there were many servants of his father who had more than enough food while he was dying of hunger. Spiritual awakening makes you come to your senses.

Hebrews 11:24-25 (KJV) - "[24] By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

The Bible talks about Moses coming to years. This points to Moses' maturing, but not physical maturing. This is because as many say, "Even fools grow old." When Moses became spiritually mature, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. His spiritual awakening made him choose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Moses understood that undergoing affliction with God's people was better than enjoying the good things that sin had to offer. Therefore, He dropped down his earthly princely heritage and title to put on the eternal heavenly one.

Zechariah received a vision from God. In the vision, the angel asked the prophet in Zechariah 4:2 what he had seen. Many things can be displayed in front of your eyes, but you won't see all. This is because you see the things which you choose to see. The angel had to ask Zechariah this question to ensure that they were both on the same page.

Zechariah answered the angel and told him that he had seen a golden candlestick, with a bowl on top of it, with seven lamps, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which were upon it (Zechariah 4:2). He also saw two olive trees, one on the right side and the other one on the left (Zechariah 4:3). The angel of God asked Zechariah if he knew what those things were (Zechariah 4:4) and Zechariah told him that he did not know (Zechariah 4:5).

Zechariah was humble in acknowledging his knowledge gaps. When you do not know something, acknowledge that you do not know it. This will make you know more than you already knew. Even if you know something, it is good to acknowledge that you do not know it fully. When you do that, you will get new methods of how to do it better. You will also get fresh and new insights concerning the matter.

Zechariah received a vision of a golden lampstand and two olive trees, symbolizing God's provision of His Spirit to empower Zerubbabel and Joshua in their leadership. Zechariah's faith in God's provision and power is clear in his reception and communication of this vision.

“In this vision the two olive trees which stand before God are represented as emptying the golden oil out of themselves through golden tubes into the bowl of the candlestick. From this the lamps of the sanctuary are fed, that they may give a bright, continuous light. So from the anointed ones that stand in God's presence the fullness of divine light and love and power is imparted to His people, that they may impart to others light and joy and refreshing. Those who are thus enriched are to enrich others with the treasure of God's love.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 594.1, Ellen G. White.

Prophesying the Mourning for the Pierced One

Zechariah 12:10 (KJ21) - "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Zechariah prophesied that the people of Israel would mourn for the one they have pierced, a prophecy pointing to the Messiah. He said that the spirit of grace and supplications will be poured

upon the house of David. The "spirit of grace" (Hebrew: ,רוּחַ חֵן ruach chen) refers to a divine influence that causes the people to experience and recognize God's favor and kindness. It means that God will pour out His grace upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, filling them with a deep awareness of His love, mercy, and unmerited favor.

The "spirit of supplications" (Hebrew: ,רוּחַ תַּחֲנוּנִים ruach tachanunim) refers to a divinely inspired disposition or influence that prompts the people to earnestly seek God's mercy and grace through heartfelt prayers and pleas. It indicates that God will instill in the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a profound sense of humility and dependence on Him, leading them to cry out for His favor and forgiveness.

Through Zechariah, God promised to pour out the spirit of grace and supplication. People will look upon Jesus whom they had pierced and will be in bitterness for the sins that they have done against God. Ask God to pour the spirit of grace and supplication upon you. This prophecy reflects Zechariah's deep faith in God's redemptive plan and the Savior's coming.

Warning Against False Shepherds

Zechariah 11:4-6 (KJ21) - "[4] Thus saith the Lord my God: "Feed the flock for the slaughter, [5] whose possessors slay them and hold themselves not guilty; and those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich'; and their own shepherds pity them not. [6] For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land," saith the Lord. "But lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.""

God told Zechariah to feed the flock of the slaughter whose possessors slay them, and they are not guilty about it. The flock in this context refers to God's people. God calls Zechariah to feed His flock because the enemy is busy killing that flock. The enemy kills God's flock through starvation, especially spiritual starvation. He does his best to ensure you do not spend time with God's Word so that you can be spiritually starved. He knows that once you are spiritually starved, no matter how physically satisfied you are, you are headed for destruction.

In this prophecy God says that He will not pity the inhabitants of the land anymore. Instead, He will deliver them into the hands of their neighbors, and they will be smitten by them. Destruction is not far from us as many of us would falsely think. We bring ourselves closer to destruction when we sin. If you want to stay far away from destruction, stay far away from sin. Zechariah warned the people against false shepherds who would lead them astray, showing his faith in God’s true guidance and leadership. He also prophesied about the eventual deliverance of God's people.

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Prophesying the Final Battle and the Lord's Triumph

Zechariah 14:2-4 - "[2] For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished. And half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [3] Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. [4] And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be

a very great valley, and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south."

Zechariah prophesied that God would gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, the city would be taken, the houses rifled (meaning plundered or looted) and the women ravished (which also means raped or violated). He prophesied that half of the city would go into captivity. The Israelites had rebelled against God. Therefore, the hedge of protection that God had placed on them would be removed and they would encounter all those challenges.

Matthew 6:33 (KJ21) - "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Jesus tells us when we seek God’s kingdom first and His righteousness, all the things we are looking for will be added unto us. One thing that we would want to have is a hedge of protection on our lives and over everything that we own like Job had. We are given this hedge of protection when we are covered in His righteousness.

When God removes it, Satan would torment us greatly. Despite the Israelites being rebellious to God, God did not want them to suffer forever. He promised to fight against all those nations that tormented them and win against them. When God fights a battle, He always fights a triumphant battle and never a losing battle. Therefore, let God fight your battles.

This prophecy has already been partially fulfilled in historical events where Jerusalem faced invasion, destruction, and suffering. For example, the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is sometimes seen as a partial fulfillment, where the city was taken, and many people were killed or taken captive. However, the specific details of Zechariah 14, such as the splitting of the Mount of Olives, have not been historically recorded, suggesting that the prophecy might not be entirely fulfilled in these past events.

The prophecy also points to a future time associated with the end times. The gathering of all nations against Jerusalem, the dramatic intervention of God, and the splitting of the Mount of Olives are events that will occur during the final battle before the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth. This interpretation aligns with other prophetic passages in the Bible that describe a climactic battle involving Jerusalem (e.g., in the Book of Revelation).

Zechariah prophesied about the last battle between the nations and Jerusalem, ending with the Lord’s triumph and the establishment of His kingdom. This prophecy illustrates Zechariah’s faith in God’s ultimate victory and justice.

In conclusion, the faith of Prophet Zechariah exemplifies unwavering trust in God's promises, a commitment to spiritual renewal, and a visionary outlook towards the future of God's kingdom. Zechariah's life and prophecies, though set in the context of post-exilic Israel, resonate with timeless themes of repentance, divine justice, and hope in the Messiah. His encouragement to rebuild the temple and his vivid visions of God's ultimate plan for humanity continue to inspire believers today.

Zechariah's legacy reminds us that faith is not only about personal belief but also about action—actively participating in God's work, upholding righteousness, and anticipating the fulfillment of God's promises. Like Zechariah, we are called to live out our faith with courage and to trust in God's sovereign control over history, knowing that His plans for redemption and restoration will surely happen.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for the gift of life and for the innumerable blessings that You have given me. Please help me to have You in my mind all the time and wherever I go. Remember me and bless me. Take away all my affliction. Rebuild me and make me better than before. Take away the social injustice in my society and provide a hedge of protection around me. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. Create specific times that you want to spend with God. Write them down and ask God to help you keep them faithfully.
2. Write down the blessings that you want God to bless you with and pray over them daily.

3. Write down the good character traits that you want to have and the bad ones that you want to cut off. Pray over them daily.
4. Ask God daily to rebuild you and make you better than before.
5. Ask God daily to remember you and uplift you from your affliction.
6. Pray against injustice in your country and in your society.
7. Every morning and every evening ask God to give a hedge of protection around you and around all that you have.
8. Recite Psalm 91 (a psalm of protection) daily.

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CHAPTER 82

THE FAITH OF PROPHET MALACHI

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Prophet Malachi prophesized God's Word correctly,

Many called have presented God's message incorrectly,

Faith is preaching God's truth in love and directly,

Leading people to God, allowing His Word to work immensely.

Prophet Malachi urged people to repent their transgressions,

He told them to repent of all their actions, words, and evil intentions,

God delights in mercy and forgives, listening to your confessions,

We are assured of forgiveness; Christ is making for us intercessions.

Malachi rebuked all forms of corruption and idolatry,

He believed in God alone, shunned iconolatry and hagiolatry,

God's abundant love and grace sets our spirits free,

Like Malachi, in God's embrace, we find serenity.

Malachi emphasized God's love and faithfulness,

He preached on tithing, keeping away from all unfaithfulness,

He told the Israelites to turn away from sin and be free from all shamefulness,

Malachi prophesied faithfully; thus, to God, he showed gratefulness.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

The name "Malachi" means "My messenger" in Hebrew, reflecting his role as a messenger of God. Malachi authored the Book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament in the Bible.

Malachi likely prophesied around the late 5th century BC, when the Jewish people had returned from the Babylonian exile and were rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. This period was a time of political and social upheaval as the Jewish community sought to reestablish itself in the Promised Land. Despite these circumstances, there was a moral and religious decline among the people.

The historical context of Malachi's prophecies is characterized by spiritual apathy and religious corruption. The people had begun to compromise their faith and religious practices, offering blemished sacrifices, and withholding tithes. There were issues with the priesthood and a general indifference toward God's commandments.

Malachi's role as a prophet during this time was to convey God's messages, often involving rebuke and correction. He challenged the religious leaders and the people to return to genuine worship, faithfulness, and obedience to God's covenant.

In addition to addressing the issues of his time, Malachi also provided Messianic prophecies. He foretold the coming of a messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord (Malachi 3:1). This Messianic prophecy laid the foundation for the expectation of the arrival of the Messiah, which is later fulfilled in the New Testament with the ministry of John the Baptist and the coming of Jesus Christ.

Despite the stern messages of rebuke, the Book of Malachi also contains messages of hope and restoration. God's love and faithfulness are emphasized, and the people are encouraged to return to Him sincerely. Malachi assures them that God will bless them if they return to obedient worship.

Much is not mentioned about Prophet Malachi in the Bible. However, he did various actions that showed he had faith in God.

These are some faithful actions that Prophet Malachi did, which are recorded in the Bible:

Prophesying God's Word

Malachi 3:1 (KJV) – "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

Prophet Malachi was faithful in prophesying God's Word. God has sent messengers who have rejected His call. God has sent messengers who have twisted His Word and did not prophesy precisely what God had sent them. Malachi prophesied exactly what God had sent him, and that is why the book of Malachi is a blessing to us to this day.

Malachi 1:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever. [5] And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel."

When we read the text in Malachi 3:1, we see that he prophesied about the coming of Jesus, which is good news because Jesus came to save us from sin. Malachi not only prophesied good news which people wanted to hear, but he also prophesied what people would refer to as sad news.

He prophesied about the curse that had befallen Edom and the destruction that would face it. He did that fearlessly. It is a perplexing task to tell people what they do not want to hear; that is why Jonah fled when God sent him to warn the people of Nineveh.

Preaching truth comes with the risk of losing one's life. Malachi esteemed the gospel higher than his life. When God sends a prophet to tell you of the negative things that you are going to encounter, He does not want you to lose hope. He tells you that as a warning so that you can repent your transgressions.

Malachi 3:16-18 (KJV) – "[16] Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. [17] And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. [18] Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."

Malachi not only prophesied about the first coming of Jesus, but also prophesied about the second coming of Jesus. The first coming of Jesus was meant to save humanity, and whoever heeded His call and believed in Him would inherit eternal life (John 3:16). The second coming of Jesus will mark the judgement day. Those who failed to believe in Jesus and hard-heartedly continued sinning would be doomed for eternity.

Malachi 4:1-4 (KJV) – "[1] For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. [2] But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. [3] And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. [4] Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."

Malachi 4:1-4 offers a powerful message about the future, where a day of reckoning is described, and it contrasts the fate of the wicked with the destiny of those who revere the Lord's name. It also emphasizes the importance of remembering and adhering to the law of Moses.

The passage begins with a vivid portrayal of a day to come, described as a day that "shall burn as an oven." This metaphorical language paints a picture of a day of intense heat and burning. It signifies a day of reckoning when the deeds of humanity will be laid bare.

The text suggests that day would be a time of divine judgment, where all the proud and wicked would be like "stubble." Stubble is the residue left after a field has been harvested, and it is highly flammable, thus emphasizing the idea of utter destruction. The passage asserts that on this day, the Lord of hosts will burn up the wicked completely, leaving them "neither root nor branch."

Amidst the fiery imagery of judgment, Malachi 4:2 provides a glimmer of hope for those who fear the name of the Lord. It speaks of the "Sun of righteousness" rising with healing in His wings. This phrase is a powerful symbol of spiritual renewal and restoration. The Sun of righteousness represents God's justice and mercy. The idea of "healing in His wings" suggests that God's righteousness will bring about restoration and renewal for those who revere Him.

The metaphor of people growing "as calves of the stall" indicates a sense of nourishment and growth. It implies that those who fear the Lord will thrive and flourish in the presence of divine righteousness. This verse contrasts sharply with the fate of the wicked, who will be reduced to ashes.

Malachi 4:3 further reinforces the theme of divine justice and the ultimate triumph of the righteous. It states that the righteous will "tread down the wicked," and the wicked will be "ashes under the soles of your feet." This imagery portrays a day when the righteous will be exalted, and the wicked will be humbled, illustrating the biblical principle of retribution, where the wicked reap what they sow.

Malachi 4:4 gives a reminder to "remember ye the law of Moses." This instruction emphasizes the enduring significance of God's commandments, as given to Moses at Horeb for all of Israel. The Law includes the statutes and judgments that governed the lives of the Israelites and guided their relationship with God.

By stressing the importance of remembering and adhering to this Law, the passage underscores the idea that faithfulness to God's commandments is a crucial aspect of honouring the Lord's name and finding favour in His sight.

Calling for Repentance

Malachi 2:2-3 (KJV) – "[2] If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. [3] Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it."

God does not delight in those who disobey Him. A sure curse will be sent to those who deliberately fail to glorify God's name. In Acts 12, an angel of the Lord killed Herod after Herod didn't glorify God's name when he gave a powerful speech in that the people said he spoke like a god. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 mentions the various curses encountered by the people who disobey God. In Malachi 2:3, God rebukes their evil and tells them He will corrupt their seed. When one does something evil, they bring curses on their children and every aspect of their lives.

Malachi 3:7 (KJV) – "7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

All hope is not lost for the disobedient and rebellious people. God tells them to return to Him, and He will return to them. He is telling them that they have a chance to change their ways and do what is right.

As long as one is alive, they can change their practices and follow the right way, which is Jesus. It does not matter the magnitude of sin that one has done. If they confess it, God is faithful and just to forgive them (1 John 1:9).

God reminds them of how they have been indulging in sin for a long time by telling them that even from the days of their fathers, they have been going away from His ordinances. Some of them might have thought that because they had been indulging in sin for a long time, they stood no chance to be forgiven. They might have lost hope in God. God never loses hope in us. He gives them a simple solution, "return to Me, and I will return to you."

"Oh, how precious was this promise, as it was shown to me in vision! "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Oh, the love, the wondrous love of God! After all our lukewarmness and sins He says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings." … Some, I saw, would gladly return. Others will not let this message to the Laodicean church have its weight upon them. They will glide along, much after the same manner as before, and will be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Those only who zealously repent will have favor with God…. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him." – With God at Dawn, Page 91, Ellen G. White.

Jeremiah 15:19-21 (KJV) – "[19] Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. [20] And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. [21] And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

Jeremiah 15:19 begins with the words, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me." This verse underscores the pivotal concept of repentance and turning back to God. It reveals the essential condition for experiencing the restoration of one's divine relationship. God's desire for Jeremiah is straightforward: return to Him, and He will restore their communion.

Furthermore, the verse encourages a separation of the precious from the vile. This separation represents the moral and spiritual discernment that God expects from Jeremiah. To be "as My mouth" implies that Jeremiah should speak the words of God faithfully and without compromise. In essence, God urges Jeremiah to remain untainted by the world's impurities and to represent Him with unwavering fidelity.

Jeremiah 15:20 introduces the metaphor of a "fenced brasen wall." This metaphor paints a vivid picture of God's divine protection surrounding Jeremiah. It signifies strength, fortification, and security. The verse acknowledges that Jeremiah's mission will not be without challenges; he will face opposition and resistance, symbolized by the people fighting against him. However, the promise remains that they "shall not prevail against thee," for God is with Jeremiah to save and deliver him.

This verse encapsulates a broader message that extends beyond Jeremiah's personal experience. It illustrates God's commitment to His servants, assuring them of His presence amid adversity. The metaphor of the "fenced brazen wall" teaches us that God's protection and strength are unwavering, providing a shield against the storms of life.

Jeremiah 15:21 culminates in the promise of deliverance from the hand of the wicked and redemption from the hand of the terrible. This verse highlights God's role as the ultimate protector

and redeemer. It serves as a reminder that no force, no matter how wicked or formidable, can thwart God's plans for His chosen ones.

The theme of deliverance runs throughout the Bible, and Jeremiah 15:21 reaffirms this timeless truth. It reassures us that, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, God is the ultimate source of rescue and redemption.

Jeremiah 15:19-21 is a poignant expression of God's unwavering commitment to His chosen servant and, by extension, to all those who faithfully serve Him. It conveys the importance of repentance, moral discernment, divine protection, and ultimate deliverance.

This passage from the book of Jeremiah is not confined to its historical context but carries timeless lessons for all believers. It reminds us of the need to return to God, to remain untainted by the impurities of the world, and to trust in His unyielding protection and redeeming power. Jeremiah 15:19-21 serves as a testament to the enduring nature of God's promises and His unfailing presence in the lives of those who stand as His faithful servants.

Luke 15:20 (KJV) – "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

When the prodigal son returned home, and his father saw him from a distance, he was over-excited to see him. His father did not wait for him to reach where he was. He ran to meet the son where he was. The Bible says, "When he was yet a great way off." This means that the father went a longer distance to meet the son than the son did. God does the greater work for us than we do.

God acts the same way. He does not wait for us to reach where He is. He is willing to come where we are when He sees that we have intentionally chosen to go where He is.

Luke 15:21-23 (KJV) – "[21] And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. [22] But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: [23] And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry."

"Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life." – Steps to Christ, Page 23.2, Ellen G. White.

“There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin. Such was the grief of Esau when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever. Balaam, terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with drawn sword, acknowledged his guilt lest he should lose his life; but there was no genuine repentance for sin, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil. Judas Iscariot, after betraying his Lord, exclaimed, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” Matthew 27:4” – Steps to Christ, Page 23.3, Ellen G. White.

“The confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a fearful looking for of judgment. The consequences that were to result to him filled him with terror, but there was no deep, heartbreaking grief in his soul, that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God and denied the Holy One of Israel. Pharaoh, when suffering under the judgments of God, acknowledged his sin in order to escape further punishment, but returned to his defiance of Heaven as soon as the plagues were stayed. These all lamented the results of sin, but did not sorrow for the sin itself.” – Steps to Christ, Page 24.1, Ellen G. White.

“But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God’s holy Law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. The “Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” illumines the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest. John 1:9. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.” – Steps to Christ, Page 24.2, Ellen G. White.

The prodigal son’s dad did not torment him when the son returned to him. He ordered the servants to bring the best robe and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

When we return to God and completely abandon our old ways of sin, God returns to us, giving us the best that He has in store for us. He does not torture us for the sins that we had committed before. Instead, He gives us the best that we are unworthy to have. This is true love. This is God’s love.

Rebuking Corruption and Idolatry

Malachi 1:6-8 (KJV) – "[6] A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is Mine honour? And if I be a master, where is My fear? Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise My name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy name? [7] Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. [8] And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts."

Malachi 1:6-8 delivers a stern rebuke from the Lord of hosts to the priests of the time. In these verses, God, speaking through the prophet Malachi, draws a poignant analogy between the reverence and honor given to earthly fathers and masters and the respect that should be offered to Him, the divine Father and Master of all creation.

God questions the lack of honor and fear shown by the priests tasked with serving as intermediaries between the people and the Divine. The tone of these verses conveys a sense of disappointment and incredulity at the priests' failure to give the proper respect and reverence to God.

The specific charges against the priests are twofold: First, they are accused of offering polluted or defiled sacrifices on God's altar. These offerings were tainted and unworthy of the divine. The priests, however, respond with a sense of indifference and ask, "Wherein have we despised Thy name?" Their apparent lack of awareness or acknowledgment of their wrongdoing adds to the severity of their neglect.

Second, the priests are accused of offering blemished and unacceptable animals for sacrifice. God questions the morality of such offerings, stating that if they were to present such sacrifices to a human governor, the governor would not be pleased or accept their offerings. In essence, God emphasizes that the same standards of respect and honor that apply to human authorities should apply to Him as the ultimate authority.

Malachi 1:6-8 is a powerful reminder of the importance of genuine reverence, honor, and purity in one's worship and service to God. They highlight the principle that God deserves the best and most

sincere offerings from His people and that half-hearted or defiled sacrifices are unacceptable in His sight. The message here encourages us to approach our relationship with God with humility, respect, and a genuine desire to honor Him in all we do.

Malachi rebuked corruption from upwards going downwards. He did not spare the priests because they were high in rank. In our justice systems today, particularly in developing countries, petty offenders are punished severely while individuals of high status, like top corrupt government officials, are spared. The reason is that we often fear people of high status.

Romans 2:11 (KJV) – "For there is no respect of persons with God." God's wrath spares no one. He is the king of kings, and no one is above Him. God wants the servants He has called to preach truth to spare no one and no sin.

By faith, Malachi rebuked the profane things that the priests did. He told them God was angry with them for offering Him polluted bread and unworthy sacrifices. We should not fear to speak the truth because we fear someone's high position in society. This is because that may be the truth that they need most. John the Baptist was killed for telling Herod the truth (Matthew 14:1-12).

Stephen was martyred for speaking the truth (Acts 7:54-60). Daniel was exalted by King Nebuchadnezzar for speaking the truth (Daniel 2:48). We do not know of the blessings that God has in store for us for telling the truth. Therefore, let us not be hesitant to preach it.

Malachi 2:8-9 (KJV) – "[8] But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the Law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. [9] Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been partial in the Law."

Malachi 2:8-9 delivers a solemn message regarding the conduct of the priests of that time. In these verses, God, speaking through the prophet Malachi, condemns the priests for departing from the path of righteousness and causing many to stumble in their adherence to God's Law. The gravity of their actions is emphasized when God declares that they have corrupted the covenant of Levi, which represents a breach of the sacred trust placed upon them.

The priests had gone astray from God's commandments. Thus, they caused many who were under their influence to stumble. As a leader, you should be careful about your impact on people,

especially if you are a spiritual leader. You should keep in mind that most of your followers don't read the Bible. Therefore, some are depending on you to tell them what to do and to show them the best example.

I have heard various people justify their actions because the pastors do the same thing. Some cook and buy food on the Sabbath because they have seen their church pastor and elders doing so. Some sin because of being given misleading advice by their spiritual leaders.

God lowered the priests because they treated His Word with contempt for their sinful actions and influence. If you exalt God's Word by doing what It says, God will exalt you. God did not want the priests to be confused because God is not an author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Therefore, He sent Malachi to tell them what was wrong with them and how they could correct it.

Malachi 2:8-9 underscores the vital importance of leaders, especially spiritual leaders, upholding the highest standards of moral conduct and fidelity to God's commandments. Their actions and influence have a profound impact on those who follow them.

God's response to the priests' transgressions is a cautionary tale, highlighting the need for leaders to exemplify their commitment to God's ways. It is a reminder that our actions as leaders have a far-reaching impact, and we should strive to exalt God's Word by living in accordance with its principles and guiding others to do the same.

Malachi 2:10-12 (KJV) – "[10] Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? [11] Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which He loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. [12] The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts."

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) – "[4] Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: [5] And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

There is only one God, and we are all members of one body, the body of Christ. As members of Christ's body, we should work together, conducting our various functions in unison. The Israelites

believed in one God but dealt treacherously against their fellow men. They went ahead to be unequally tied in marriage with unbelievers who worshipped strange gods.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 (KJV) – "[14] Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? [15] And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [16] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Being unequally yoked with a person with whom you don't share the same beliefs is like taking someone else's foot or hand and putting it on your body. It may function, but it won't work correctly like your own hand. You will be feeling that something is missing. God told Malachi the root cause that caused many of their problems, and that was being unequally yoked.

"In seeking to strengthen his relations with the powerful kingdom lying to the southward of Israel, Solomon ventured upon forbidden ground. Satan knew the results that would attend obedience; and during the earlier years of Solomon's reign—years glorious because of the wisdom, the beneficence, and the uprightness of the king—he sought to bring in influences that would insidiously undermine Solomon's loyalty to principle and cause him to separate from God. That the enemy was successful in this effort, we know from the record: "Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the City of David." 1 Kings 3:1." – Prophets and Kings, Page 53.1, Ellen G. White.

"From a human point of view, this marriage, though contrary to the teachings of God's Law, seemed to prove a blessing; for Solomon's heathen wife was converted and united with him in the worship of the true God. Furthermore, Pharaoh rendered signal service to Israel by taking Gezer, slaying "the Canaanites that dwelt in the city," and giving it "for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife." 1 Kings 9:16. This city Solomon rebuilt and thus apparently greatly strengthened his kingdom along the Mediterranean seacoast. But in forming an alliance with a heathen nation, and sealing the compact by marriage with an idolatrous princess, Solomon rashly disregarded the wise provision that God had made for maintaining the purity of His people. The hope that his

Egyptian wife might be converted was but a feeble excuse for the sin." – Prophets and Kings, Page 53.2, Ellen G. White.

"For a time God in His compassionate mercy overruled this terrible mistake; and the king, by a wise course, could have checked at least in a large measure the evil forces that his imprudence had set in operation. But Solomon had begun to lose sight of the Source of his power and glory. As inclination gained the ascendancy over reason, self-confidence increased, and he sought to carry out the Lord's purpose in his own way. He reasoned that political and commercial alliances with the surrounding nations would bring these nations to a knowledge of the true God; and he entered into unholy alliance with nation after nation. Often these alliances were sealed by marriages with heathen princesses. The commands of Jehovah were set aside for the customs of surrounding peoples." – Prophets and Kings, Page 53.3, Ellen G. White.

"Solomon flattered himself that his wisdom and the power of his example would lead his wives from idolatry to the worship of the true God, and also that the alliances thus formed would draw the nations round about into close touch with Israel. Vain hope! Solomon's mistake in regarding himself as strong enough to resist the influence of heathen associates was fatal. And fatal, too, the deception that led him to hope that notwithstanding a disregard of God's Law on his part, others might be led to revere and obey its sacred precepts." – Prophets and Kings, Page 54.1, Ellen G. White.

Solomon's story serves as a cautionary tale. It underscores the dangers of self-assuredness, overconfidence, and deception, especially in matters of faith and leadership. It illustrates that even the wisest among us can be led astray when we underestimate the influence of those around us and the power of our own decisions.

Solomon's narrative serves as a warning about the potential consequences of such errors in judgment, mainly concerning matters of spiritual leadership and faith.

Malachi 2:13 (KJV) – "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand."

The people constantly went to God while crying, but their cry was not genuine. God is not moved so much by the expressions we show on our faces or the sadness we pretend to have. Eloquent words do not drive him. He is moved by an earnest heart.

In times of distress, individuals may cry out to God, hoping to find solace and relief. They may attend religious services, recite scripted prayers, and make grand gestures that appear to express their desperation. Yet, too often, these actions become mere rituals performed out of obligation or social pressure. The external display may be moving, but it may not genuinely reflect the state of the heart.

The Bible tells the story of a people who cried out to God, not out of genuine need, but as a pretense. In the book of Isaiah, the Lord confronts this issue: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isaiah 29:13, NIV). It is a powerful reminder that outward appearances or empty words do not deceive God. He sees the heart and knows the true nature of our intentions.

In contrast to empty cries, sincere prayer is a genuine outpouring of the heart. It is an intimate conversation with the Divine, rooted in authenticity and vulnerability. Such prayer is not bound by a specific religious tradition or elaborate language; it transcends barriers and cultural differences.

Sincere prayer is about opening one’s heart to God, sharing joys and sorrows, and seeking guidance and comfort. It is not about impressing others with eloquent speeches or public displays of religiosity. Instead, it is a deeply personal and honest expression of one’s innermost thoughts and feelings.

The beauty of sincere prayer lies in its ability to connect the human spirit with the Divine. God, as portrayed in various religious and spiritual traditions, is not swayed by the superficiality of our external expressions but is deeply moved by the authenticity and earnestness of the heart.

In various Psalms, David lays bare his soul before God, expressing his joys and struggles, his triumphs, and defeats. David’s relationship with God was not built on empty rituals or grandiose displays but on the sincerity of his heart.

God responds to earnest hearts by offering comfort, guidance, and peace. This response is not necessarily a miraculous intervention in every situation but may come in the form of inner strength, clarity of thought, or a deep sense of assurance.

As we seek solace and guidance in times of need, let us strive to make our prayers authentic and earnest, bearing in mind that God sees beyond the facade and recognizes the sincerity of our hearts. In doing so, we can tap into the transformative power of genuine prayer, finding comfort, strength, and divine guidance on our life's journey.

Malachi 3:13-15 (KJV) – "**13** Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against Thee? **14** Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? **15** And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

The people's words are described as "stout against me, saith the Lord," meaning they had spoken harshly or critically of God. However, the people seem oblivious to their words as they respond, "What have we spoken so much against thee?" In other words, they appear to deny their complaints, suggesting a lack of self-awareness or a tendency to downplay their grievances against God.

Malachi 3:14, the people express their frustration by questioning the value of serving God. They say, "It is vain to serve God," and wonder, "What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" This reflects a disillusionment, as they feel that their faithfulness and obedience to God's commandments have not resulted in tangible benefits or blessings. They might have believed their devotion to God should have shielded them from difficulties or suffering.

Most human beings can only do something if something is in store for them. We always want something in exchange. Many people do not obey God because they do not see profit in doing so. Many do not serve in the church because they do not see the value.

The Israelites did not know the importance of serving God and obeying Him. What we fail to understand is that God has already given us so much for free. The air we breathe, the proper functioning of our bodies, and the various gifts we possess have been given to us for free. The best way to thank God for giving us all these is by obeying and serving Him.

Malachi 3:15 delves into the people's perception of injustice in the world. They observe that the proud and those who engage in wickedness appear to prosper and are "set up," while even those who "tempt God" by challenging His ways seem to escape unharmed. This perspective suggests a sense of moral frustration, where people see those who act contrary to God's will succeeding in life while they struggle.

God's response to these concerns is found in the subsequent verses, where He emphasizes the importance of faith, obedience, and trust in His plan. He calls for patience and highlights that a day of judgment will come when the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked will face consequences for their actions.

Emphasizing God's Love and Faithfulness

Malachi 1:2 (KJV) – "I have loved you, saith the Lord."

When God began speaking to the Israelites through Prophet Malachi, He started by telling them what He had done for them and His attitude toward them. He started by telling them that He had loved them. He wanted them to see how unjust they were to Him and how unfairly they treated Him despite Him showing them love. God has shown us love, but we keep on mistreating Him.

As long as a person is alive, they do not have a good enough reason to disobey God. Some can say that they are disobedient to God because God has not blessed them. Such people forget that the gift of life, among other privileges they enjoy, is a blessing. We need to know that if we want God to take us to the next level, we should be faithful at the current level He has placed us in.

1 John 4:8 (KJV) – "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Proof of not knowing God is by hating each other. Proof of not knowing God is by disobeying God's commands. To know God is to love. Love is not shown best by the emotions we have in our hearts but through the actions we do. When we genuinely go out of our way to help the poor, we prove that we know God.

When we genuinely respect our subordinates, we demonstrate that we know God. When we keep time, we prove that we know God. When we talk to each other instead of about each other, we show that we know God.

When we keep the seventh day Sabbath, we prove that we know God. The Bible does not say that God has love; it says that God is love. God and love are the same. They are inseparable. We who are created in the image of God should always be loving.

1 John 4:16-18 (KJV) – "[16] And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. [17] Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

Malachi 3:6 (KJV) – "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

The opening phrase, "For I am the Lord, I change not," conveys the profound concept of God's immutability, which means that God does not change in His essence, character, or nature.

Unlike humans and the world around us, God remains constant and consistent. This unchanging aspect of God's character is a source of great comfort and assurance for believers. It means His love, mercy, righteousness, and faithfulness are unwavering and reliable.

This verse is part of a dialogue between God and the people of Israel. The book highlights a period when the people had strayed from God, become spiritually apathetic, and were engaging in unfaithful practices. Despite their waywardness, God's unchanging nature is a reassurance that His covenant promises to the sons of Jacob (the descendants of Israel) remain intact.

The latter part of the verse, "therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed," underscores the idea that it is solely because of God's unchanging nature that the Israelites have not been utterly destroyed or consumed due to disobedience. God's enduring faithfulness and covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have preserved the nation even when they deserved judgment. His mercy, rather than His wrath, has been extended to them.

Malachi 3:6 serves as a reminder that God's faithfulness extends to us as well. In a world marked by change and uncertainty, God's unchanging character provides a firm foundation for our faith. We can trust in His promises, knowing that His love and grace are always available to us, regardless of our circumstances.

While God's unchanging nature brings comfort, it also encourages repentance. The context of the verse in Malachi is a call for the people to return to God, honour Him, and be faithful to their covenant relationship with Him. It reminds us that, though God does not change, we can change our ways and align ourselves with His unchanging truth.

God is always faithful. He is more faithful than a compass needle pointing north, more faithful than a coin that always lands on heads and more faithful than a mountain that never moves. Hebrews 13:8 (KJV) – "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

God never changes. The miracles that He did in time past, He can do them now. I have heard various people saying that the miracles in the Bible can't happen in this present age. God can still raise the dead the way He raised Lazarus. Some people say that in this current time, God cannot punish people the way He used to punish them in the Bible. God still has the same power to do that but does not delight in punishment. He delights in mercy.

Foretelling the Coming of the Messiah

Malachi 3:1 (KJV) – "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

Malachi prophesized the coming of Jesus Christ. He prophesied about John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Jesus (Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27).

"In an ancient royal procession, the messenger went before the king to announce his arrival, to indicate the route, and to remove any obstacles in the road. John the Baptist fulfilled the exact ministry for Jesus." – Enduring Word Bible Commentary, David Guzik.

Malachi prophesized this so that the people would be prepared for the coming of Jesus. The Bible tells us that God does not do anything before revealing it to His servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7).

God does not want to catch us by surprise. Therefore, He gives us a clue of what He will do. He may not always give us the full details on how He will do it and when He will do it, but He will surely tell us of the coming events, especially if they are significant.

Malachi 3:2-5 (KJV) – "**2** But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: **3** And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. **4** Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. **5** And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts."

The passage begins by asking a rhetorical question, "But who may abide the day of His coming?" This refers to a future event when God's presence and judgment will be made manifest. It is a day of reckoning when people will have to account for their actions and their faith.

The description of God as a "refiner's fire" and "fullers' soap" emphasizes the purifying and cleansing nature of God's presence. Just as a refiner purifies precious metals like silver and gold by melting away impurities, God's presence refines and purifies the hearts and lives of people. The "fuller's soap" refers to the cleaning agent used to launder clothes, emphasizing the thorough cleansing and renewal that God brings.

Malachi 3:3 mentions explicitly that God will purify the sons of Levi. In the Bible, the Levites were a tribe chosen for priestly duties. This purification signifies the need for religious leaders and servants of God to be morally and spiritually clean, setting an example for others.

The purpose of this purification is so that the people, including the sons of Levi (the priests), can offer sacrifices and worship to the Lord in righteousness. It highlights the importance of sincere and pure worship, where offerings are given with genuine devotion and adherence to God's commandments.

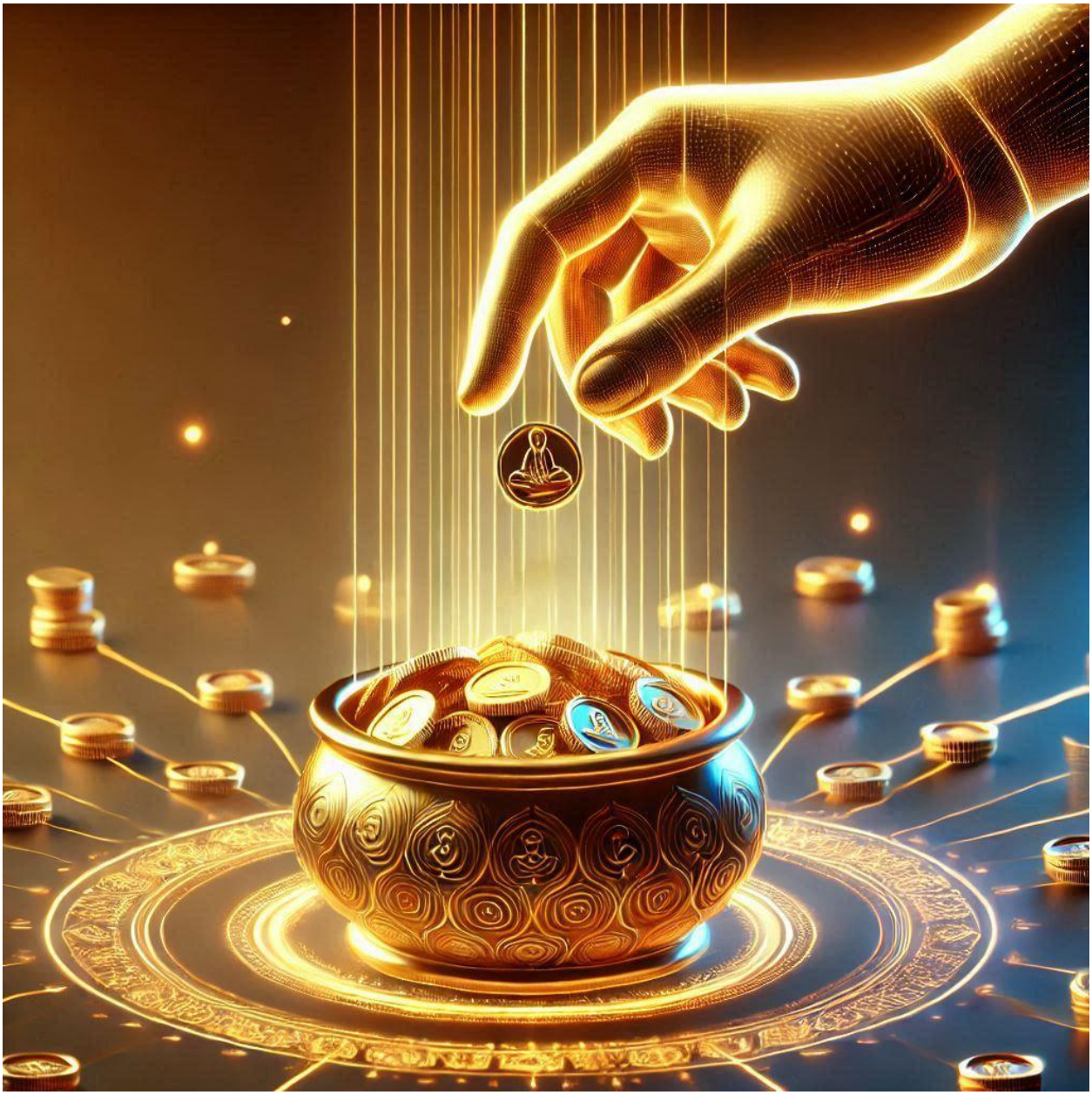
Malachi promises that when this purification occurs, the offerings from Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as they were in the old days. This suggests a time of restoration and renewed favour from God. It implies that when people turn their hearts back to God and live in righteousness, they will experience blessings and a return to the close relationship with God that characterized earlier times.

In Malachi 3:5, God declares His intent to come near to pass judgment. He will act as a swift witness against various wrongdoings, including sorcery, adultery, false oaths, and oppression of vulnerable members of society (hirelings, widows, orphans, and strangers). This signifies that there will be consequences for those who engage in such sinful behaviour.

Malachi 3:2-5 speaks of a day of reckoning when God will purify and refine His people, including the religious leaders, to bring about genuine and righteous worship.

The passage also emphasizes the importance of moral conduct and social justice, warning of consequences for those who engage in wicked practices. It is a call to return to a close and righteous relationship with God and to live according to His commandments.

Encouraging Tithing and Offerings



Malachi 3:8-12 (KJV) – "[8] Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. [9] Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation. [10] Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [11] And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall

your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. [12] And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

In this Bible text, the phrase, "Saith the Lord of hosts" is repeated three times. Malachi wants to assure us that God is speaking these words. Often, when preaching to God's people, preachers give their own opinions instead of giving a plain, "Thus saith the Lord." Every word that proceeds from our mouth when preaching, teaching, or speaking to others should be according to God's Word.

Secondly, Malachi may have emphasized the phrase. "saith the Lord of hosts." Because the words he wrote might have seemed impossible for people to believe. For example, it might have been difficult for people to think that God can open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that the individual lacks room to receive.

It is difficult for someone to believe that it is possible to plant and do your business and profit without Satan causing harm to it. It is also hard for someone to believe all nations calling them blessed.

These astonishing blessings are promised to us when we refrain from robbing God. Failure to return tithes and offerings is likened to robbing God, and those who steal from God are cursed. God is so good that He allows us to get abundant blessings. What he tells us to do is quite effortless. He tells us to return a tithe, which is ten per cent of all our increase. In addition to the tithe, we should return offerings.

God has commanded us to return a tenth to Him as tithe. He has not commanded the percentage of offerings that we are required to return. He leaves it open for us to choose. We can give an additional 0.005% as an offering or an extra 50% as an offering. That is for us to decide. However, we should take note that nothing given to God is lost.

Many facing financial challenges would be relieved of those challenges if they faithfully returned tithes and offerings. Refrain from returning tithe opens up the door of the devourer. It creates a loophole by removing the hedge of protection covering your finances and your life in general.

Tithing results to blessings. However, tithing alone is not enough. It should be accompanied by obeying all commandments of God. Tithing is one act of love, and each commandment of God is an act of love.

"The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy emphasize the importance of returning the tithe to God on a timely and systematic basis: "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Proverbs 3:9 "Of all our income we should make the first appropriation to God." – Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, Page 474, Ellen G. White.

"We are not to consecrate to Him what remains of our income after all our real or imaginary wants are satisfied; but before any portion is consumed we should set apart that which God has specified as His." – Counsels on Stewardship, Page 71, Ellen G. White.

"Even if a member does "set apart" the tithe as his income is received but does not bring it to the "storehouse" at regular intervals, he goes counter to inspired instruction and exposes himself to the temptation to borrow the tithe for personal use. "The Lord calls for His tithe to be given in to His treasury, strictly, honestly and faithfully, let this portion be returned to Him." – Counsels on Stewardship, Page 82, Ellen G. White.

"That which has been set apart according to the Scriptures as belonging to the Lord, constitutes the revenue of the gospel, and is no longer ours. It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others." – Tithing Principles and Guidelines, Page 19.2, Ellen G. White.

"Some may have good intentions of eventually returning the tithe, but choose to do so at a more convenient time—perhaps at the end of the year. Such persons are not only putting their own needs ahead of the claims of God but run the risk of getting so far behind in their obligations to God that it may be very difficult for them to ever catch up." – Tithing Principles and Guidelines, Page 19.3, Ellen G. White.

One of the most fundamental reasons why postponing tithing is discouraged is that it reflects a neglect of one's spiritual commitment. Tithing is not merely a financial transaction; it is an expression of faith and loyalty to one's religious beliefs. When individuals continually delay their tithing, they risk placing their financial needs above their spiritual duties. This can lead to a growing detachment from Godly principles that guide their lives.

Another critical concern related to postponing tithing is the accumulation of unpaid obligations. When individuals consistently defer their tithing contributions, they create a backlog of unfulfilled financial commitments to their faith community. This accumulation can become burdensome and

overwhelming over time, making it increasingly difficult to catch up on unpaid tithes. Consequently, it may lead to a cycle of postponed payments, leading to long-term financial strain and a sense of indebtedness to the church.

Churches often rely on tithing to fund their activities, services, and community support initiatives. Postponing tithing disrupts the financial stability of these institutions. It can impede their ability to provide essential services, support charitable activities, and maintain the physical infrastructure, such as places of worship and educational facilities. The cumulative effect of delayed tithing can undermine the community individuals aim to support through their contributions.

God blesses us when we return tithe. Postponing tithing may result in missed opportunities to experience the spiritual and personal benefits that are believed to accompany faithful giving. When tithing is delayed, individuals may be deprived of the fulfillment and well-being that comes from aligning their actions with their faith.

Tithing should be regarded as a timely and consistent practice that not only benefits churches but also nurtures the individual's spiritual well-being. By fulfilling this financial obligation promptly, individuals can align their actions with their faith, strengthen their religious communities, and experience the manifold blessings associated with faithful giving.

"There are men whom God has blessed, whom He is testing to see what response they will make to His benefits. They have withheld their tithes and offerings until their debt to the Lord God of Hosts has become so great that they grow pale at the thought of rendering to the Lord His own,—a just tithe. Make haste, brethren, you have now the opportunity to be honest with God; delay not." – Counsels on Stewardship, Page 97, Ellen G. White.

Prophet Malachi showed faith by preaching the truth as God had told him to. The Book of Malachi is a profound testament to a crucial period in the history of the Jewish people and their relationship with God. Through its historical context and prophetic messages, it sheds light on the challenges and moral decline the Israelites faced upon their return from exile.

Malachi, as the messenger of God, fearlessly rebuked corruption, and indifference, calling for a return to genuine faith and obedience. Notably, his prophecies of a coming Messiah offered a glimmer of hope in a time of spiritual desolation, laying the groundwork for fulfilling these prophecies in the New Testament.

The Book of Malachi, while delivering messages of rebuke, ultimately leaves us with the promise of restoration, encouraging us to embrace God's love and faithfulness as we journey in faith.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

As I reflect on the Book of Malachi and its messages of rebuke and hope, I come before You with a grateful heart. Lord, just as Malachi called for a return to genuine faith and obedience, may I, too, be inspired to deepen my relationship with You, to honour Your commandments, and to seek sincerity in my worship. In moments of moral decline, help me to stand firm in faith and to share my love and truth with others.

We are thankful for the hope and restoration in the promises of a coming Messiah, fulfilled through Jesus Christ. May I continue to find hope and encouragement in Your enduring love and faithfulness.

As I journey in faith, may Your presence guide me and may Your grace sustain me. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

- Find a peaceful place to reflect and meditate on the lessons from the Book of Malachi, particularly the importance of faith, obedience, and recognizing God's presence.
- Take a few moments to read a passage from the Book of Malachi.
- Reflect on your life and consider areas where you may have strayed from sincere faith or obedience to God's commandments.
- In your journal, write down your reflections, acknowledging any specific areas in your life where you can improve your faith and obedience.
- Set personal goals for nurturing your faith and obedience in the coming days or weeks. These can be simple acts of kindness, volunteering, prayer, or studying scripture.

- List some of the things that you do in church or during your personal worship that you cannot do in the presence of an earthly judge or king and commit to refrain from doing them.
- Make a commitment to always return tithes and offerings. Return ten percent as a tithe to God, and Prayerfully set the percentage of offerings that you are willing to return to God.
- Commit to being more aware of God's presence in your daily life, recognizing His guidance and blessings even in small moments.

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CHAPTER 83

THE FAITH OF ZACCHAEUS

In ancient Jericho, where the publican was,
The rich Zacchaeus was eager to see the real boss,
A tax collector who people despised and scorned,
Yet, in his heart, he longed for the Savior's bond.

Zacchaeus' faith, like a sycamore tree, stood firm,
Its roots delve deep, a lesson to learn.
Zacchaeus climbed to have a glance at the Son of Man,
He couldn't walk slow; his eagerness made him run.

Opportunity met a heart prepared,
Christ came and to Zacchaeus He declared,
To come down and receive Him because He cared,
Zacchaeus came down, invited Jesus to his house, and shared.

In a world where the rich and poor unite,
The gospel's embrace, a boundless light,
Like eagles, God wants us to take a flight,
To love and serve and have faith day and night.

"Make haste, come down," the Savior spoke,
A call to humbleness, sin to revoke.
Salvation visited Zacchaeus' home,
A son of Abraham, no longer to roam.

Murmurs rose like distant thunder,
Judgments cast as people wondered.
Yet, undeterred, Zacchaeus chose,
To climb the tree, in faith, He arose.

A sycamore, with roots profound,
In Christ alone, our surest ground.
Nature's lesson, vivid and clear,
Faith in God is the foundation dear.

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Restitution, a transformed heart's decree,
Repentance lived; a life set free.
Half his wealth to the poor, he gave,
A soul redeemed from sin's dark cave.

In murmurs, the crowd questioned the choice,
To dine with a sinner, they raised their voice.
Yet Christ sought and saved what was lost,
No soul is too far, no matter the cost.

Let this tale echo, a biblical song,
Your faith, like a sycamore, sturdy and strong.
In our climb to the ultimate promise, with hearts restored,
We share the gospel, our risen Lord.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Luke 19:1-2 (KJV) – "[1] And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. **[2]** And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich."

"The chief among the publicans," Zacchaeus, was a Jew, and detested by his countrymen. His rank and wealth were the reward of a calling they abhorred, and which was regarded as another name for injustice and extortion. Yet the wealthy customs officer was not altogether the hardened man of the world that he seemed. Beneath the appearance of worldliness and pride was a heart susceptible to divine influences. Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus. The report of One who had borne Himself with kindness and courtesy toward the proscribed classes had spread far and wide. In this chief of the publicans was awakened a longing for a better life. Only a few miles from Jericho, John the Baptist had preached at the Jordan, and Zacchaeus had heard of the call to repentance. The instruction to the publicans, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (Luke 3:13), though outwardly disregarded, had impressed his mind. He knew the Scriptures, and was convicted that his practice was wrong. Now, hearing the words reported to have come from the Great Teacher, he felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God. Yet what he had heard of Jesus kindled hope in his heart. Repentance, reformation of life, was possible, even to him; was not one of the new Teacher's most trusted disciples a publican? Zacchaeus began at once to follow the conviction that had taken hold upon him, and to make restitution to those whom he had wronged." – The Desire of Ages, Page 552.4, Ellen G. White.

The Jewish people harbored animosity towards tax collectors, commonly known as publicans, due to the perception that they engaged in dishonest practices. Publicans were often criticized for imposing excessive taxes beyond what was deemed fair. Zacchaeus not only held the role of a publican but also held a prominent position among them, indicating that he was a leading tax

collector. This might imply that he held a high-ranking position among tax collectors. This also implies that he was the most corrupt or the one who embezzled the most money.

The Bible says that Zacchaeus was rich. Jesus was not discriminative. He equally ministered to the rich and poor people in society. Many people make it look like worshipping God is only meant for poor people since they are assumed to be the ones who have more problems. Poor people are not the only ones with problems; the rich also have problems. The gospel is meant for the rich and the poor. It is meant for all races and tribes.

On the other hand, some churches and some chosen men of God treat the rich with ample respect and despise the poor. The love of Christ is not in them because true love is non-discriminative. They also forget that we live in a world that's round both physically and spiritually, and anytime tables can turn. One who was the poorest can become the richest within a day or in a fleeting time period. The gospel is meant for everybody. John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world." God did not love a specific group of people only. He loved the world.

Luke 19:3-4 (KJV) – "**3** And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. **4** And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way."

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but because he was short in size and there was a huge crowd, he realized that if he stayed in the crowd, he would not see Him. Therefore, before Jesus came, he ran and climbed a sycamore tree. Zacchaeus made an early preparation before the Lord Jesus came. He did not wait for Jesus to arrive for him to climb the tree.

Even though Zacchaeus was a sinner, he had some faith. He heard that Jesus was coming to that town and climbed the tree before Jesus arrived. Opportunity always meets preparation. The Bible says, "Zacchaeus ran before." In other words, he made fast action. He prepared quickly. If he had failed to act fast and to act immediately, he would have probably missed seeing Jesus since Jesus was probably passing by while going somewhere else.

A former Kenyan Member of parliament called Kimani Ngunjiri, before he became a member of parliament, jumped in the middle of the road, and stopped the president's motorcade when he heard that former President Moi was passing. At that time, he was afflicted as his land was being stolen,

so he wanted the president to intervene. What he did was considered illegal, but he risked it to get help from the president.

Luckily for him, the president helped him. We should act like that, especially when it comes to Godly things. For any service that God calls us to do, we should pounce on it quickly without delay. We need to be bold, always grabbing opportunities when they pass by.

Sometimes opportunities may come as emergencies, like how Jesus passed through Jericho, and you must act fast. Secondly, God loves it when you take risks, as long as you don't sin while taking those risks. This is because taking risks is an act of faith.

Many would achieve immense success if they took action on the truth immediately before consulting other people. Consulting people may sometimes slow you down, especially those who give you ungodly advice and those who discourage you.

People give you advice based on what they know, and what they know is limited since most of us only know what we have experienced or what has been revealed to us. No matter how many years we have lived on this earth, what we have not experienced is way more than what we have experienced.

Zacchaeus recognized the value of seeing Jesus, so he ran to climb a tree. If he didn't understand the value, he wouldn't have bothered. Few people understand the true value of the gospel. Few people understand the meaning of "It is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Some Christians don't understand the value of attending church. Over 90% of Christians don't understand the value of the Sabbath. Many do not understand the value of obeying the Ten Commandments. Many Christians do not see the value of Bible study and memorization. Some do not see the value of personal prayers, while others do not see the value of fellowship. Many don't see the value of praying as a family. Very few see the value of fasting and praying.

There is nothing written in scripture that is accidental, or that has no significance. There is a reason why the tree that Zacchaeus climbed is specified. God could have inspired Luke to write that Zacchaeus climbed onto a tree without being specific on the type of tree it was, but He did not do that. He was specific about the type of tree that Zacchaeus climbed, a sycamore tree.

When studying the Bible, try to find deeper reasons why some things are written. For example, when you see a place mentioned in the Bible, try to find out the meaning of the name of that place if it has not been stated in the Bible.

When you read the genealogy of Jesus, Noah, or anyone else in the Bible, try to find out the meaning of those names mentioned in the genealogies. If you do that, the Holy Spirit will reveal deeper and essential truths you did not know. Some truths the Holy Spirit will reveal to you are truths that had never been revealed to anyone else, and you will be highly privileged to receive them.

Having said that, what is a sycamore tree? I read about it, and I discovered that a Sycamore tree is an immensely durable tree with a rapid growth rate and expansive root system. It is described as an exceptionally durable tree with large roots. These characteristics denote that it is a stable tree. It is a strong tree with branches that cannot easily break.

Zacchaeus ran to climb a tree that was stable. As Christians, we need to build on a stable foundation and that foundation is Jesus. A sycamore tree can grow from 30 meters to 40 meters (96 feet to 131 feet) tall.

The Bible describes Zacchaeus as short in stature. He might have been three to four feet tall. There were people in the crowd who were taller than him, probably five feet or six feet or seven feet, or even more. He did not consider his height an obstacle to getting what he highly valued. He went and climbed one of the tallest trees in the area. Climbing the sycamore tree heightened his view from 3 to 4 feet to 96 to 131 feet.

Disability should never be inability. God has created nature to complement us. Zacchaeus used nature to complement the height he was not gifted with to get what he wanted. Nature has the cure for various diseases, even chronic ones.

Nature is also filled with spiritual lessons to learn from. By climbing one of the tallest trees, Zacchaeus proved to us that we don’t need to have everything or be gifted with everything for us to succeed.

Zacchaeus did not feel sorry for himself that he could not see Jesus. Instead, he did everything that he could do to see Christ. In his time, some people were taller than him, but since they didn’t

understand the value of Jesus, they remained at home, for they had no interest in seeing the Lord Jesus pass by their town.

Luke 19:5 (KJV) – "And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

When Jesus looked up, He saw Zacchaeus. Many things are up that God has created, for example, the sky, the branches, and leaves of trees, the clouds, the birds, etc.

In the midst of all that, Jesus saw Zacchaeus. That should tell you how precious the life of a human being is to God. The life of a human being is more precious to God than everything He has created. Genesis 1:26 (KJV) – "Let us make man in Our image."

We can see here that Jesus called Zacchaeus by name, meaning He knew Zacchaeus. He did not ask Zacchaeus what his name was. Zacchaeus also knew who Jesus was, so he climbed a sycamore tree to see Him. Jesus had never ministered to Zacchaeus before despite knowing him.

The reason why He had never ministered to him was that Zacchaeus never showed interest in receiving Christ. God cannot force you to accept or follow Him. He will let you go the way you choose. However, this time round, when Jesus was passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus was extremely interested to see Him, so he made an effort to climb a sycamore tree. The climbing of the sycamore tree was an act of faith.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – "But without faith, it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Zacchaeus pleased God because he showed faith. Zacchaeus was materially rich, but he had sunk deep in sin since He was the chief among the publicans. He needed someone to lift him from sinking in the deep dirty river of sin. God saw his faith and rewarded him immediately with what he desperately needed.

God gives you what you need. God could not have awarded him with riches because he already had them. He rewarded him with salvation. Jesus saw Zacchaeus' efforts and immediately gave him what he needed.

If Zacchaeus had been in the crowd, maybe Jesus could not have seen him. Jesus saw Zacchaeus because he stood out. It would be best if you stand out when doing the right things. Your effort needs to stand out by always going the extra mile in every good thing that you do.

Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus and told him something. Jesus did not just see Zacchaeus physically, but He saw Zacchaeus' interest in Him. When Jesus saw that Zacchaeus was interested in Him, He spoke to him. Immediately, He gave the chief of the publicans His Word.

When God sees that your heart is interested in Him, He immediately gives you a blessing, His Word. After He gives you His Word, it is up to you to choose whether to obey it. Jesus told him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

Jesus told Zacchaeus to make haste and come down. In other words, He told him to hurry up and humble himself. If you want to interact with God, you must first come down. It would be best if you first humbled yourself. You cannot be up while God is down. That may be one reason God dwells in Heaven, high above us.

Psalm 2:4 (KJV) – "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." God laughs when the wicked imagine a vain thing (Psalm 2:1), and that vain thing is thinking that you are better, smarter, or higher than God.

Jesus first told Zacchaeus to humble himself. He did not start by condemning Zacchaeus or telling him about his sins. Many preachers preach good messages in vain because the people they are preaching to have not humbled themselves.

After telling Zacchaeus to humble himself, He bids him to invite Him to his house. Asking Zacchaeus to invite Him to his house was also asking him to invite Him to his heart. Revelation 3:20 (KJV) – "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." God is knocking at the door of your heart. Let Him in.

Jesus had to ensure that Zacchaeus had first humbled himself and invited Him to his heart before He could proceed with the message and changing the chief publican's life.

The Sermon on the Mount, which entails the life of a true Christian, was a sermon meant for the disciples of Jesus. It was a sermon meant for a converted person.

Matthew 5:14 – "Ye are the light of the world." The light of the world is not an unconverted person; it is a converted person. Therefore, Jesus had to ensure that Zacchaeus surrendered to Him so He could change his life. Total surrender to Christ has numerous benefits.

Luke 19:6 (KJV) – "And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully."

Zacchaeus humbled himself immediately and received Jesus joyfully. Many people receive Jesus half-heartedly. They give their lives to Christ but feel sad when they remember how much fun they had in the world. When they reminisce about life in nightclubs or how they used to get lots of money through theft, they want to return. Some of them don't take long before they return to the sin they had allegedly left.

"It is when Christ is received as a personal Saviour that salvation comes to the soul. Zacchaeus had received Jesus, not merely as a passing guest in his home, but as One to abide in the soul temple. The scribes and Pharisees accused him as a sinner, they murmured against Christ for becoming his guest, but the Lord recognized him as a son of Abraham. For "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Galatians 3:7." – The Desire of Ages, Page 556.4, Ellen G. White.

Luke 19:7 (KJV) – "And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

The majority of people don't like to see success. They don't like to see progress. Negative news usually spread faster than positive news. When one talks of how much God has blessed them, they are shunned and seen as bragging. But when one talks about how much they are facing problems, they are always entertained, especially by people who, most of the time, pretend to be sympathizing but deep in their hearts are happy.

Comedians and memes are considered funny because they often speak about the negative things in life. Stories of a person's failures bring more laughter than stories of success. If you find negative things funny, you must repent and seek God earnestly to change your heart.

Instead of the people being happy for Zacchaeus, they started gossiping about him of how he was a sinner. They remembered his past failures instead of seeing his present and future success of salvation. The Bible says, "they murmured." This means they spoke in hushed tones because they

knew what they said was wrong. This also means that they were sinners as much as Zacchaeus was, or maybe more than he was, because they knew gossiping was a sin, but they still did it.

If they were genuine, they would have rejoiced that Zacchaeus met the Savior. They would have also made a step in inviting Jesus to their houses, but they didn't do that. Instead, they despised His ministry. Let's learn to celebrate people's success and not despise it. If we despise people's success, we may never succeed because we cannot get what we despise.

Luke 19:8 (KJV) – "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of Heaven." – The Desire of Ages, Page 555.6, Ellen G. White.

"The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher. "Holiness unto the Lord" is to be written upon daybooks and ledgers, on deeds, receipts, and bills of exchange. Those who profess to be followers of Christ, and who deal in an unrighteous manner, are bearing false witness against the character of a holy, just, and merciful God. Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life. Like the chief publican, he will give proof of his sincerity by making restitution. The Lord says, "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; … none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: … He shall surely live." Ezekiel 33:15, 16." – The Desire of Ages, Page 556.1, Ellen G. White.

"If we have injured others through any unjust business transaction, if we have overreached in trade, or defrauded any man, even though it be within the pale of the law, we should confess our wrong, and make restitution as far as lies in our power. It is right for us to restore not only that which we have taken, but all that it would have accumulated if put to a right and wise use during the time it has been in our possession."- The Desire of Ages, Page 556.2, Ellen G. White.

Zacchaeus returned all he had stolen fourfold. Zacchaeus gave half of his gifts to people experiencing poverty and remained with half. That is true reformation which is quite rare. Some people used to be armed robbers or corrupt people in government or where they were appointed.

Some people turn to Christianity to evade the penalties they may face due to what they have done. Some have managed to be 'successful' in doing that. Unfortunately, they never return what they have stolen to the rightful owners, and they continue using their stolen resources. Zacchaeus returned with interest to the people he had conned.

Some good, righteous people were stolen from by Zacchaeus. When Zacchaeus stole from them by false accusation, they might have felt discouraged from living a righteous life because they were robbed, making them have less than they originally had. God's timing is perfect.

Through Zacchaeus, God restored them fourfold. If Zacchaeus had not stolen from them, they would still have what they had or less than since it would have been used. Zacchaeus stealing from them was a blessing in disguise. It is like they had given money to Zacchaeus to invest, and after investing, he returned to them four times what they originally had.

Some had been stolen from the previous week or the previous day and were still in pain. While they were still in pain, God came and comforted them. Matthew 5:4 (KJV) – "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." This also teaches us that as a Christian, there is no one who can rob you. They may attempt to rob you, but they will be robbing themselves. Zacchaeus robbed himself because he had to return fourfold, meaning he returned what he had stolen and what he had not.

As a child of God, when somebody does something evil to you, whatever dreadful thing they have done to you is a blessing in disguise. You may feel like you've lost, but you've won. That is why the Bible says in Matthew 5:10-12 (KJV) – "**10** Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. **11** Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. **12** Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Luke 19:9-10 (KJV) – "[9] And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"To Zacchaeus the Saviour said, "This day is salvation come to this house." Not only was Zacchaeus himself blessed, but all his household with him. Christ went to his home to give him lessons of truth, and to instruct his household in the things of the kingdom. They had been shut out from the synagogues by the contempt of rabbis and worshipers; but now, the most favored household in all Jericho, they gathered in their own home about the divine Teacher, and heard for themselves the words of life." – The Desire of Ages, Page 556.3, Ellen G. White.

Christ came to save what was lost. It doesn't matter the risk it takes to find that one soul who is lost. Like the shepherd in the wilderness who went searching for that one sheep, Christ searches for that one soul at the risk of His own life. His love for us made Him die on the cross and suffer all the afflictions He suffered despite being God.

Like the lost coin, which made the woman sweep the whole house to find it, Christ will do His best to find you no matter how much you have sunk in sin.

"The lost coin represents those who are lost in trespasses and sins, but who have no sense of their condition. They are estranged from God, but they know it not. Their souls are in peril, but they are unconscious and unconcerned. In this parable Christ teaches that even those who are indifferent to the claims of God are the objects of His pitying love. They are to be sought for, that they may be brought back to God…. The coin, though lying among dust and rubbish, is a piece of silver still. Its owner seeks it because it is of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God's sight accounted precious. As the coin bears the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God; and though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul, and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. The woman in the parable searches diligently for her lost coin…. So in the family, if one member is lost to God, every means should be used for his recovery. On the part of all the others, let there be diligent, careful self-examination. Let the life-practise be investigated. See if there is not some mistake, some error in management, by which that soul is confirmed in impenitence." – With God at Dawn, Page 73, Ellen G. White.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We come before you with gratitude and humility, acknowledging your sovereignty and love. Thank you for the inspiring story of Zacchaeus, a man who, despite his past, found redemption through faith in Jesus Christ. Your grace knows no bounds, and we are grateful for the hope and transformation Zacchaeus experienced.

As we reflect on this story, may it serve as a reminder that your love extends to all, regardless of their past mistakes or societal status. Help us, Lord, to be vessels of your love and grace, reaching out to those who may feel lost or marginalized. May we have the compassion to see beyond outward appearances and embrace the potential for redemption in every soul.

Grant us the faith and courage to take swift action, just as Zacchaeus did, when opportunities to draw closer to you present themselves. May we recognize the value of your teachings and prioritize them in our lives. Teach us to stand out in our commitment to righteousness, even when faced with murmurs and judgments from others.

Lord, help us to be like the stable sycamore tree upon which Zacchaeus climbed—a symbol of unwavering faith and a sturdy foundation in Christ. May we grow tall in our spiritual journey, overcoming any perceived limitations or disabilities with your strength.

We pray for a spirit of celebration rather than judgment within our hearts, rejoicing in the salvation of others. May we, like Zacchaeus, experience the joy of salvation and willingly make amends for any wrongs we may have committed. Please help us to be instruments of reconciliation and restoration in the lives of those we encounter.

Lord, may your Holy Spirit guide us to share the message of salvation with those who have yet to experience your redeeming love. May our lives be a testimony to your transforming power.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Activity

1. **Reflection:** Take a moment to reflect on areas in your life where you may need to climb the metaphorical “sycamore tree” to get a clearer view of Jesus. Identify opportunities for growth, repentance, or a deeper commitment to your faith.
2. Action Steps:

- **Immediate Obedience:** Is there a prompt or call from God in your life that you’ve been delaying or hesitating to follow? Take immediate action in obedience, just as Zacchaeus ran ahead to climb the tree before Jesus arrived.
- **Acts of Compassion:** In the spirit of Zacchaeus’s transformation, consider engaging in acts of kindness and compassion. These acts could involve helping those in need, offering forgiveness, or making amends in relationships.
- **Bold Witness:** Challenge yourself to stand out in your faith, even if it means facing murmurs or judgments from others. Be bold in sharing the message of salvation and be a light in your community.

May these actions bring glory to God and contribute to the ongoing transformation of your life and the lives of those around you.

GOD BLESS YOU!

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CHAPTER 84

THE FAITH OF PAUL

As he journeyed to Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him,

It was at that moment that Paul stopped making God's light grow dim,

He was a Pharisee, Christians, he was zealous to trim,

God humbled him, God's humbling aims to lift your self-esteem.

Paul preached God's Word fearlessly,

No shame in the Good News, he preached it relentlessly,

With God's power, he did not preach it carelessly,

Studying it diligently, he preached it intellectually.

By faith, Paul endured hardships for Christ's sake,

Opposed, persecuted, they tried to cut his ministry like a slice of cake,

He held onto it, connected on it, like a head on a neck,

He fought the good fight, finished the race, and left nothing at stake.

Paul wrote many epistles, exhorting people,

Representing the perceived complex truth, in a way so simple,

He was willing to be crippled, for the Gospel not to cripple,

To this day, his work has an effect that's still ripple.

Hebrews 11:32-35 (KJV) – "[32] And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: [33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Introduction

"From among the most bitter and relentless persecutors of the church of Christ, arose the ablest defender and most successful herald of the gospel. With the apostolic brotherhood of the chosen twelve, who had companied with Christ from his baptism even to his ascension, was numbered one who had never seen the Lord while he dwelt among men, and who had heard his name uttered only in unbelief and contempt. But beneath the blindness and bigotry of the zealot and the Pharisee, Infinite Wisdom discerned a heart loyal to truth and duty. And the voice from Heaven made itself heard above the clamors of pride and prejudice. In the promulgation of the gospel, Divine Providence would unite with the zeal and devotion of the Galilean peasants, the fiery vigor and intellectual power of a rabbi of Jerusalem. To lead the battle against pagan philosophy and Jewish formalism, was chosen one who had himself witnessed the debasing power of heathen worship, and endured the spiritual bondage of Pharisaic exaction." - Sketches from the Life of Paul, Page 9.1, Ellen G. White.

"Saul of Tarsus was a Jew, not only by descent, but by the stronger ties of lifelong training, patriotic devotion, and religious faith. Though a Roman citizen, born in a Gentile city, he was educated in Jerusalem by the most eminent of the rabbis, and diligently instructed in all the laws and traditions of the Fathers. Thus he shared, to the fullest extent, the hopes and aspirations, the lofty pride and unyielding prejudice, of his nation. He declares himself to have been "a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He was regarded by the Jewish leaders as a

young man of great promise, and high hopes were cherished concerning him as an able and zealous defender of the ancient faith.” - Sketches from the Life of Paul, Page 10.1, Ellen G. White.

The Apostle Paul stands as a towering figure in the annals of Christian history, his life and works leaving an indelible mark on the faith he fervently propagated. Renowned for his zealous missionary journeys, his profound theological insights, and his unwavering commitment to the Gospel, Paul's life is a testament to the transformative power of faith. The faith chapter of Hebrews 11 extols the deeds of the faithful, chronicling the extraordinary feats accomplished by those who trusted in God. In this context, Paul's faith emerges as a pivotal force that not only shaped his destiny but also the trajectory of early Christianity.

Paul, originally known as Saul of Tarsus, was born into a Jewish family in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39, 22:3). The name Saul is of Hebrew origin. The name means "asked for" or "prayed for," reflecting his Jewish heritage and the expectations of his parents. A Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28), Saul was well-versed in Jewish law and tradition, having studied under the esteemed Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). His early life was marked by a fervent commitment to Judaism and a zealous persecution of the fledgling Christian movement, which he viewed as a heretical sect threatening the purity of Jewish faith (Acts 8:3; Galatians 1:13-14).

Saul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6) stands as a pivotal moment in his life and in the history of Christianity. As he neared Damascus with an intent to arrest Christians, a blinding light from heaven suddenly enveloped him, and he heard the voice of Jesus questioning his persecution. This divine encounter left Saul blind for three days, during which time he neither ate nor drank. It was Ananias, a disciple in Damascus, who, following a divine directive, laid hands on Saul, restoring his sight and baptizing him (Acts 9:10-18).

Following his conversion, Saul adopted the name Paul. The name Paul is of Latin origin. The name means "small" or "humble," which may reflect his newfound humility and mission to the Gentiles. God did not force Paul to keep his Jewish name, Saul. In some cultures, people want to dictate the name that you are supposed to use just to keep the laws of tradition.

Paul embarked on an unparalleled missionary career. His journeys took him across the Roman Empire, where he established churches, preached the Gospel, and wrote epistles that would become foundational texts for Christian doctrine. His letters, such as those to the Romans,

Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians, provide profound theological insights and practical guidance, addressing issues of faith, ethics, and community life.

Paul's life was marked by significant hardships and persecutions, yet he remained steadfast in his mission. He endured beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, and various forms of opposition (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Despite these trials, Paul's faith in Christ never wavered. He famously declared, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13), encapsulating his reliance on divine strength.

Ultimately, Paul's unwavering faith and relentless efforts culminated in his martyrdom in Rome. Tradition holds that he was beheaded under Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians around AD 64-67. Given that Paul was likely born around AD 5-10, he would have been approximately 55-65 years old at the time of his death. His legacy, enshrined in his epistles and the Acts of the Apostles, continues to inspire, and instruct believers worldwide.

In examining the faith of Paul, one finds a life profoundly transformed by a divine encounter, driven by an unshakeable commitment to spreading the Gospel. His journey from a persecutor of Christians to a pivotal leader of the faith underscores the transformative power of belief and the enduring impact of unwavering faith in God's promises.

Paul’s Conversion and Commission

Acts 9:3-18 (KJ21) - “[1] And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, [2] and asked of him letters to the synagogues at Damascus, that if he found any who were of this Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. [3] And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven. [4] And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” [5] And he said, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the goads.” [6] And he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” And the Lord said unto him, “Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” [7] And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man. [8] And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he could see no man; but they led him by the hand and

brought him into Damascus. [9] And he was three days without sight, and neither did he eat nor drink. [10] And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Behold, I am here, Lord.” [11] And the Lord said unto him, “Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for the one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth [12] and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.” 13 Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many of this man, and how much evil he hath done to Thy saints in Jerusalem. [14] And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Thy name.” [15] But the Lord said unto him, “Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. [16] For I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” [17] And Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus who appeared unto thee on the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” [18] And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized.”

Saul was going to Damascus to persecute Christians, as was his custom. While on his way to that sinful mission, he encountered God. A light shone from heaven causing him to fall on the earth. Jesus talked to him and asked him why he was persecuting Him by persecuting Christians. Saul was frightened and he asked Jesus what he was supposed to do. Jesus told him to arise and continue his journey to Damascus and he will be told what to do when he reaches there.

Saul was originally heading to Damascus before encountering Jesus, but he was going there to sin. When he met Jesus on the way, Jesus did not tell him to change his direction. Instead, He gave him a new assignment at the same place where he was going.

You might be heading to the right place but for the wrong purpose. For example, some people go to church to show off the new dress they bought, a new hairstyle, or a new car. Church is the right place to go to but when it is mingled with the wrong purpose it ends up being fruitless or less fruitful than it ought to be.

When you encounter Christ, He will either change your direction or give you a new purpose in the direction you are heading. For example, one might be a criminal and going to commit a robbery while his purpose was to be a preacher. In that case, God changes the direction of that person

completely. One might be a musician but singing songs that glorify sin, in that case, God calls upon that person to maintain the same direction of music but to change the content they are singing.

Saul was made blind at that moment. The men who were with him were speechless because they heard a voice, but they could not see who was speaking. Jesus did it while they were there so that they too could have a chance to witness His power and that they may get converted as well. If they chose not to be converted, they would hold no one accountable because they were present at the scene where Jesus Himself spoke. Those people held Paul by the hand and took him to Damascus.

For three days and three nights, Saul had no physical sight. Neither did he eat or drink anything. For that brief period, his sense of sight and taste were deprived of physical necessities. One reason God did that to him was so that he could become less acquainted with the physical and more in tune with the spiritual.

When we close our eyes during prayer, we are deprived of seeing the physical things that are around us. Therefore, we become more aligned with the spiritual than the physical. When we fast and pray, our physical bodies are deprived, thus we become more focused on the spiritual and less on the physical. Therefore, our mind goes to a higher dimension as it is uplifted to realize that there is life beyond what is perceived with the five physical senses.

The Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision. He gave Ananias a mission to go into the street called Straight and inquire in the house of Judah a man called Saul of Tarsus. God told Ananias that Saul was praying at that place. God told Ananias that Saul had seen a man called Ananias in a vision putting his hand on him and causing him to receive his sight.

Ananias told God that he had heard how dangerous Saul was and how he persecuted followers of Christ. God told Ananias to go (and fear not) because Saul was His chosen vessel, and He was going to bear God’s name before unbelievers (the Gentiles) and believers (the children of Israel) (Acts 9:13).

The Lord told Ananias that He would also show Saul what great things he must suffer for His name’s sake (Acts 9:16). Ananias went and met with Saul and told him that it was Jesus who had sent him to minister to him (Saul) that Saul should receive his sight and get filled with the Holy

Ghost (Acts 9:17). Immediately scales fell from Paul's eyes, and thus he received sight and got baptized (Acts 9:18).

This moment of conversion might have been the moment when Saul's name was changed to Paul. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (AMP) - "Therefore if a anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]."

When Saul received the Holy Ghost at the time of His Baptism, He became a new person. When one becomes a new person, everything about him becomes new, sometimes even his name. God changed Abram's name to Abraham when He gave Abram a new covenant (Genesis 17:4-5). Thus, this might have been the moment when Saul's name was changed to Paul because that was when his life was turned around by God and made brand new.

The Bible does not specify an exact moment when Saul's name was changed to Paul. Instead, the transition happens gradually in the text. Maybe his name was not even changed. He may have had two names, Saul, when associating with the Jews and Paul when associating with the Romans. Saul is first referred to as Paul in Acts 13:9:

"But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him" (Acts 13:9, NASB).

This verse occurs during Saul's first missionary journey, when he is in Cyprus. After this point, he is consistently referred to as Paul in the narrative. The name change is often understood as symbolic of his new mission and identity as an apostle to the Gentiles.

In Hebrew, the name Saul (שָׁאוּל, Sha'ul) means "asked for" or "prayed for." This name was fitting for Saul of Tarsus, as he was likely named after the first king of Israel, King Saul, who was also from the tribe of Benjamin. The name Paul (Παῦλος, Paulos) is of Latin origin and means "small" or "humble." This name reflects a more modest identity, which aligns with Paul's mission and ministry to the Gentiles, emphasizing humility and servitude.

Paul's parents might have named him Saul because they were looking forward for their son to be a king or a great man in society. Every time someone called Saul's name it reminded him of King

Saul and as a result it made him feel great about himself as it was the name of the king. This feeling might have led to pride which caused him to commit sinful acts like persecuting Christians as his heart was infiltrated with pride.

Whenever he used the name Paul, it caused him to realize how small he was before God, and it brought a sense of humility to his heart and to realize that he is dependent on God in everything that he does. It is when we acknowledge our insufficiency and our need for God that we can achieve lofty heights of greatness.

God was looking forward for Paul to be a great man in society but not necessarily a king. He was to use him in other ways. Paul ended up writing about half of the books of the New Testament which are read to this day. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that He ended up being great, in the purpose that God intended him to.

Preaching the Gospel Fearlessly

Paul fearlessly preached the Gospel, despite facing opposition, persecution, and imprisonment.

Acts 20:24 (KJV) - "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

After Paul had stayed for three days and nights without eating, he ate some food and he felt strengthened. He did not delay. He moved by faith and started preaching the gospel immediately. Witnessing should start immediately after the experience of salvation. Newly converted people usually shy away from witnessing, citing that they have insufficient knowledge to share. No human being has enough knowledge of God.

One might think they know God so much because they have read the Bible four hundred and forty-one times, only to read it again and recognize that there are still many things that they do not know yet. God is infinite, we cannot exhaust Him. You should share the little that you know with others. No single converted person knows everything about God and no single unconverted person knows nothing about God.

Therefore, all who have been made disciples are called to go out and make new disciples for Christ (Matthew 28:19). You will increase in knowledge, understanding and wisdom as you witness. So, do not delay, start immediately and fearlessly.

Acts 20:22-24 (KJV) - "[22] And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. [23] Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. [24] But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

In Acts 20:22-24, Paul went to Jerusalem knowing very well of the danger that he would encounter there. People do something because they are aware of the rewards that they will get. It is not easy for someone to do something knowing that they are going to face danger. Paul did not relent even after knowing what was going to befall him in Jerusalem. Instead, he said, “None of these things move me.” My friend Steve said, “As long as you are on the right, and you know you are on the right, there is nothing to fear.”

Wicked people are the ones who should fear because sin shakes, and it causes instability. Righteous people should be as bold as a lion because truth always stands firm. You can destroy the messenger, but you cannot destroy the truth. As a messenger of truth, you should have confidence in that knowledge. People might harm you, but they won’t destroy you. Messengers of truth have been persecuted but we still study about them and the truth that they taught many years after they died. Nothing could move Paul. Nothing could stop him.

Enduring Hardships for the Sake of Christ

Paul endured numerous hardships, including beatings, imprisonment, and shipwrecks, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 (AMP) – “[23] Are they [self-proclaimed] servants of Christ?—I am speaking as if I were out of my mind—I am more so [for I exceed them]; with far more labors, with far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, and often in danger of death. [24] Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three

times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day [I have spent] adrift on the sea; [26] many times on journeys, [exposed to] dangers from rivers, dangers from bandits, dangers from my own countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among those posing as believers; [27] in labor and hardship, often unable to sleep, in hunger and thirst, often driven to fasting [for lack of food], in cold and exposure [without adequate clothing]. [28] Besides those external things, there is the daily [inescapable] pressure of my concern for all the churches. [29] Who is weak [and I do not feel his weakness]? Who is made to sin [and I am not on fire with sorrow and concern]?"

In this particular text, Paul recounts the severe challenges he has gone through while spreading the gospel. He talks of how he constantly risks his life to preach the truth. He says that his life was endangered both by believers and unbelievers, by foreigners and his own countrymen. No place was safe for him, be it in the city, wilderness or even on the sea. Despite all this external torment, what drives him is his concern for all the churches. He wanted people to receive Jesus and get saved more than he wanted himself to be safe and comfortable.

In many countries, people risk their lives to come up with revolutions that are going to bring change to that country. In many instances, they are imprisoned, tortured while some are killed. The beauty is that despite all that, their efforts do not go fruitless. Their efforts bear fruit. Our country Kenya was under single-party rule. Through the people's activism, multiparty democracy was introduced in 1992. We have had other subsequent revolutions that have positively changed how things work.

Unfortunately, I rarely see Christians move with that level of passion for God as people do for politics and fighting for their rights. If we would spread the gospel fearlessly like that, God's will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Pastor Benard Ombori said that he wishes people were zealous in spreading God's message the way they are zealous in political protests. He said that Christ might come soon if people expressed that level of zeal because one reason why Jesus has not yet come is because He wants more people to get converted. Paul did not consider his external suffering, the fire that was internally burning in him was greater than the external persecution.

These are the instances when Apostle Paul was persecuted:

Stoning at Lystra

Acts 14:19-20 (KJ21) – "[19] And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. [20] However, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."

Paul was stoned by his own people (the Jews) and left for dead. The Bible tells us that after stoning him they thought he had died. This means that the stoning was so severe. However, despite that, he did not give up. He continued spreading the good news. The goodness of the good news should drive one to endure the evil of the world.

Beaten and Imprisoned at Philippi

Acts 16:22-24 (KJ21) – "[22] And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded that they be beaten. [23] And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. [24] Having received such a charge, he thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks."

The multitude rose up against Paul and Silas. The Bible does not tell us how many there were. It is quite painful when one person beats you. Imagine many people beating you. It is like 'mob justice' that is done to thieves and robbers. Some thieves stopped stealing after they encountered mob justice.

After they were severely beaten, they were not taken to hospital, they were taken to prison. In many countries today, the respect for human rights will cause the authorities to take a criminal to hospital first before they take them to prison. Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. When they were thrown in prison, their feet were fastened in the stocks so that they would not escape.

Persecution at Thessalonica

Acts 17:5-10 (AMP) - "[5] But the [unbelieving] Jews became jealous and taking along some thugs from the lowlifes in the marketplace, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking

Jason's house, tried to bring Paul and Silas out to the people. [6] But when they failed to find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too; [7] and Jason has welcomed them into his house [and protected them]. And they all are saying things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, [actually] claiming that there is another king, Jesus." [8] They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. [9] And when they had taken security (bail) from Jason and the others, they let them go. [10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they entered the synagogue of the Jews."

Reading Acts 17:5-10 and Acts 16:22-24 we see that mob justice was a common thing for Paul. Paul faced opposition from the Jews. The unbelieving Jews became jealous and took some thugs from the marketplace and formed a mob. They attacked Jason's house so that they could bring Paul and Silas out to the people. However, they failed to find them. Instead, they accused Jason of hiding Paul and Silas in his house and protecting them.

When Paul and Silas were released at night to head to Berea, they did not rest. When they arrived, they entered the synagogue of the Jews. The Word of God can do wonders inside you that no other power can do. One of the key ingredients of success is persistence. When God's Word is working in you, you will be successful because it will stir up persistence in you that you won't stop until you achieve your goal.

No Christian can say that they have achieved their goal, no matter how lofty their achievements are. This is because God calls us to have no limits in our service to Him. Our work on this earth should end when we die. When you wake up and realize that you are alive, it is a moment to recognize that you still have more work to do.

Persecution at Berea

Acts 17:13-14 (AMP) – "[13] But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the Word of God [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ] had also been preached by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and disturbing the crowds. [14] So at that time the brothers immediately sent Paul away to go as far as the sea; but Silas and Timothy remained there [at Berea]."

Jews from Thessalonica stirred up the crowd against Paul when they learned that God's Word had also been preached by Paul in Berea. They did not want the people of Berea to receive God's Word. Satan does everything to block the Word of God from reaching people because he knows how powerful and liberating God's Word is.

The Devil wants people to remain powerless, intimidated and in captivity. He wants them to be so tormented so that they keep on sinning. Once they indulge in sin, sin traps them and they find it very difficult to get out of that trap. The Jews went to Berea agitating and disturbing the crowds. Immediately, the fellow believers (brothers) of Berea sent Paul away to go as far as the sea while Timothy and Silas remained there.

Opposition in Corinth

Acts 18:5-6 (AMP) - "[5] When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to [preaching] the Word and solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed). [6] But since the Jews kept resisting and opposing him and blaspheming [God], he shook out his robe and said to them, 'Your blood [be] on your own heads! I am innocent [of it]. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"

Paul faced opposition from the Jews numerous times. Sometimes the opposition he would face would involve harsh persecutions. In Acts 18:5-6, Paul responds to the opposition and blasphemy from the Jews by declaring his intent to turn his focus to preaching to the Gentiles. God is long suffering but when He sees that He has given a person many chances and that person is becoming more rebellious instead of repenting, He brings judgment to that person. Paul was patient with the Jews but when he saw how rebellious they were, he decided to shift his focus to the Gentiles.

There are people out there who are more than willing to listen to the message God has given you. There are people out there who are willing to buy your product or service. There are people out there who are willing to love you wholeheartedly. Do not force people to listen to you who do not want to. Do not force people to buy your product or service who show contempt for what you are selling. Do not force people to love you who have chosen to hate you.

As a Christian, love them but do not force them. When they come asking for help, do your duty as a Christian to help them, but do not waste time trying to persuade them. This is because when you spend so much time trying to persuade them, you are depriving the audience that really needs what you are offering from getting what you are offering. Serve everybody but give priority to those who need and want you most.

Acts 18:12-13 (AMP) - "[12] But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews unitedly attacked Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, [13] declaring, 'This man is persuading people to worship God in violation of the law.'"

In Acts 18:12-13, the Jews in Achaia brought Paul before Gallio. Gallio was the Roman proconsul of Achaia. They accused Paul of persuading people to worship God in ways that were contrary to the law. This event reflects the constant opposition Paul faced during his ministry.

Arrest and Trial in Jerusalem

Acts 21:27-36 (AMP) - "[27] When the seven days [of purification] were almost over, the Jews from [the province of] Asia [Minor], seeing Paul in the temple, began stirring up the crowd and they seized him, [28] shouting, 'Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.' [29] For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul, and they assumed that he had brought the man into the temple. [30] Then the whole city was provoked and confused, and the people rushed together; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the gates were closed. [31] Now while they were trying to kill him, word came to the commander of the [Roman] garrison that all Jerusalem was in a state of upheaval. [32] So he immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down among them. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. [33] Then the commander came up and arrested Paul and ordered that he be bound with two chains; then he asked who he was and what he had done. [34] But some in the crowd were shouting one thing and others something else, and since he could not determine the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken to the barracks. [35] When Paul got to the steps, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence

of the mob; [36] for the majority of the people kept following them, shouting, 'Away with him! [Kill him!]'"

Many of the Jews were discriminative. They had accused Jesus of mingling with sinners and non-Jews and they accused Paul of the same thing. Many of the Jews did not want to mingle with other nations. Therefore, they accused Paul of defiling the holy temple by bringing in Greeks. This discrimination came as a result of misunderstanding the gospel. Misunderstanding the gospel will cause the same amount of harm or more than what will be caused by lack of reading the gospel.

Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of the gospel that the Jews had shown of not wanting to mingle with other people is shown with some Christians today. Members of certain churches seclude themselves and do not want to mingle with members of other churches or religions because they think that their church is right while the others are wrong. It might be true that their church follows the whole Bible doctrine to the latter but that gives no one the right to be discriminative to others.

They brought the accusation of defiling the temple to Paul because they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and they assumed that Paul had brought the man into the temple. The people in the city were provoked and confused and they rushed together and seized Paul and drugged him out of the temple. Immediately after that, the gates were closed. When they were trying to kill Paul, word came to the commander of the Roman garrison that the entire Jerusalem was in a chaotic state.

Therefore, the commander immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down among them. When the people saw the commander and soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came and arrested Paul and ordered that he should be bound with two chains. He arrested Paul because he thought that Paul was the one in the wrong as the majority was against him. As a Christian, sometimes you may seem that you are losing when spreading the gospel not because you do not have the right facts but because the majority of people have hard-headedly and hard-heartedly chosen to follow error and to block truth.

The commander went ahead and asked Paul who he was and what he had done. The Bible does not record Paul responding. Instead, it records the people responding on behalf of him.

Matthew 5:37 (KJ21) - "But let your communication be, ‘Yea, yea’ or ‘Nay, nay’; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

When you feel that you really want to justify and prove that you are righteous, keep in mind that the feeling you are having is an evil feeling. This is why Jesus would keep silent when false accusations were leveled against him. Paul kept silent too.

Normally, Satan uses such situations to corner you so that you can get agitated and sin through your lips or through your actions. Someone may come and attack you and tell you something that is very offensive against Christianity. This may make you angry and in turn you resolve to retaliate with words that will create more pain attacking that person and his religion. Some Christians win in such arguments and after they win, they feel victorious and ignorantly think that God is happy with them because they have valiantly defended Him.

God needs no one to defend Him for He can defend Himself. Sometimes people may accuse you falsely and you resolve to swear (by God’s name, or your mum’s name or anyone else’s name) in a bid to prove that you did not do what they accused you of. Wanting to prove that you are a good person is a feeling of pride because you want to exalt yourself above that which they falsely think of you. Don’t exalt yourself, God will exalt you.

When Paul was asked what he had done, the people answered on his behalf. However, some shouted one thing while others shouted another thing. Paul keeping quiet and letting people accuse him falsely worked in his favor. Since the commander could not determine the facts as the people were shouting, he ordered that Paul should be taken to the barracks. When Paul got to the steps, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. The majority of people, kept following them shouting that Paul should be killed.

Acts 21:37-40 (AMP) - "[37] Just as Paul was about to be taken into the barracks, he asked the commander, 'May I say something to you?' And the man replied, 'Do you know Greek? [38] Then you are not—as I assumed—the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led those 4,000 men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?' [39] Paul said, 'I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.' [40] When the commander had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned to the people with

his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect (Aramaic), saying:"

When Paul was about to be taken to the barracks, he asked the commander if he could say something to him. The commander thought that Paul wants to defend himself. He was hoping that Paul was not the Egyptian who sometime back stirred up a rebellion and led 4,000 men of the assassins into the wilderness. Out of the mistreatment of the people, the commander automatically thought that Paul had done something wrong. Unfortunately, in the world that we are living in, people respect you when they see other people respect you and they disrespect you when they see others disrespecting you. Paul told him that he is a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia and begged the commander to allow him to speak to the people. Fortunately, the commander allowed him.

This is what Paul said:

Acts 22:1-21 (AMP) - "[1] 'Brothers and fathers (kinsmen), hear my defense which I now offer to you.' [2] When they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet. And he continued, [3] 'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city [at the feet] of Gamaliel, and educated [thoroughly] in the law of our fathers, being ardent and passionate for God just as all of you are today. [4] I persecuted and pursued the followers of this Way to the death, binding them with chains and putting [followers of Jesus] both men and women into prisons, [5] as the high priest and all the Council of the elders (Sanhedrin) can testify [because from them I received letters to the brothers, and I was on my way to Damascus in order to bring those [believers] who were there to Jerusalem [in chains] to be punished].' [6] But as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a great blaze of light suddenly flashed from heaven and shone around me. [7] And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' [8] And I replied, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' [9] Now those who were with me saw the light, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. [10] And I asked, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord answered me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed and destined for you to do.' [11] But since I could not see because of the glorious intensity of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. [12] And one Ananias, a devout man according to the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [13] came to see me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive

your sight!’ And at that very moment I recovered my sight and looked up at him. [14] And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to [progressively] understand His plan with clarity and power, and to see the Righteous One (Jesus Christ, the Messiah) and to hear a message from His [own] mouth. [15] For you will be His witness to all men testifying of what you have seen and heard. [16] Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.’ [17] Then it happened when I had come back to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple [enclosure], that I fell into a trance (vision); [18] and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ [19] And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know [without any doubt] that in every synagogue I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You and Your message of salvation. [20] And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing nearby, approving and consenting to his death, and guarding the coats of those who were killing him.’ [21] And the Lord said to me, ‘Go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’"

“Paul declared that in his unconverted state he had known Christ, not by personal acquaintance, but merely by the conception which he, in common with others, cherished concerning the character and work of the Messiah to come. He had rejected Jesus of Nazareth as an impostor because He did not fulfill this conception. But now Paul's views of Christ and His mission were far more spiritual and exalted, for he had been converted. The apostle asserted that he did not present to them Christ after the flesh. Herod had seen Christ in the days of His humanity; Annas had seen Him; Pilate and the priests and rulers had seen Him; the Roman soldiers had seen Him. But they had not seen Him with the eye of faith; they had not seen Him as the glorified Redeemer. To apprehend Christ by faith, to have a spiritual knowledge of Him, was more to be desired than a personal acquaintance with Him as He appeared on the earth. The communion with Christ which Paul now enjoyed was more intimate, more enduring, than a mere earthly and human companionship.” - Acts of the Apostles, Page 452.1, Ellen G. White.

When Paul was given a chance to speak, he took that opportunity to witness about his encounter with Christ. The Commander and the people thought that Paul wanted to defend himself. He did not defend himself by saying how right he was. He did not even urge them to pull back from punishing him as they were planning to. He spoke of his journey to Christ, giving a testimony of the type of person he was before he met Jesus on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians.

Jesus had done a special work in Paul that he thought well of others and sought to benefit them at the present moment when those he was caring for wanted to kill him.

After listening to this speech, what did the crowd do?

Acts 22:22-29 (AMP) - "[22] The crowd listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!' [23] And as they shouted and threw off their cloaks and tossed dust into the air, [24] the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by scourging, so that he might find out the reason for the outcry against him. [25] But when they stretched him out with thongs (the scourging ropes), Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, 'Is it legal for you to scourge a Roman citizen who has not been tried?' [26] When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and said to him, 'What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen!' [27] The commander came and asked Paul, 'Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?' And he said, 'Yes.' [28] The commander replied, 'I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money.' Paul said, 'But I was actually born a citizen.' [29] Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately backed away, and the commander also was afraid when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had put him in chains."

After listening to that speech, the crowd shouted that Paul should be killed. They shouted, threw off their cloaks and tossed dust into the air. As they did that, the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by scourging, so that he might find out the reason for the outcry against him. When they stretched him out with scourging ropes, Paul asked the centurion who was standing by if it was legal for him to scourge a Roman citizen who had not been tried. This shows that Paul was educated in Roman law as well as God’s law.

As Christians, we should be educated in a wide range of studies, especially in those things pertaining to us. In that education, we should put the Bible as the foundation for that education. Many Christians do a great error when they set worldly education in the same respect with the Bible. Some do a grievous harm when they place it higher than the Bible.

People will spend so much time studying for a worldly exam than they spend studying the Bible. Other devoted Christians block themselves from acquiring other knowledge when they have the opportunity to do so because they want to stick to reading the Bible alone. Paul was educated in

the Jewish and Roman Laws. Daniel and his friends (Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) were educated in the Word of God and in the Babylonian education as well.

The Babylonians were unbelievers but Daniel and his friends did not neglect their education. For those who are not properly rooted in God's truth may endanger themselves when trying to learn other things. They may not be able to know and discern truth from error since they are not so familiar with the truth. Therefore, when they find a doctrine or a philosophy that sounds sensible, they are highly likely going to follow it. Daniel and his friends learned God's truth first before they learnt other things.

Parents and guardians should teach their children the Word of God before they enroll them in school. Unfortunately, many parents enroll their children to school before teaching them the Word of God. This behavior comes automatically mainly because those parents prioritized worldly education before God's education and since it somehow 'worked' for them, they pass on the same system to their kids. This trait leads to lack of faith in society which results to powerless churches and by large a powerless world.

If God's Word was prioritized more than the science of the world, we would have more ground breaking scientific inventions than we currently have. We would have more material wealth than we currently have. In other words, the quality of life would be higher than it currently is. Lack of faith in God has caused the majority of the problems in society. Not only has it caused the majority of the problems, but it has also blocked many from coming up with solutions that are going to solve the current problems.

Herbert W. Armstrong said that the Bible does not contain all knowledge in detail but it is the foundation of all knowledge. Scientific and other secular books written by men may and highly likely contain errors. Someone who has neglected Bible study and follows such books may not be able to discern between what is true and what is false. This person may struggle a lot in trial and error because they are busy applying principles and theories that do not work. They may also apply principles that will do damage to them as individuals and to society at large.

Ask yourself, why it is that very few of the most educated professors in any field have come up with significant inventions. No theological modern professor has authored a huge number of writings in diverse topics as Ellen G. White. Ellen G. White was a grade three dropout. Majority

of the great inventors of the world were not very educated people. A good number of them did not even have university degrees. Majority of the people who have founded unicorns (billion-dollar) technology enterprises are not technology or business professors.

Worldly education without God does not amount to much. If you study God's Word and set it as the foundation of all other education, you will achieve unfathomable greatness. If you can be an engineer or a doctor or in any other non-theological career who has prioritized the Bible more than any other study, you will do great achievements in that field of study more than those who spend hours and days studying secular work.

Ancient Chinese general, military strategist and Philosopher Sun Tzu said, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." Daniel and his friends knew themselves (through the study of God's Word) and knew the enemy, therefore, they were excellent and more knowledgeable than everyone else in the Babylonian kingdom. Paul knew God's Word, he also knew the Roman constitution, and therefore, he was able to acquire freedom from being imprisoned or killed or both.

The commander and the centurion pulled back when they heard that Paul was a Roman citizen and he was born as a Roman citizen. The knowledge that Paul had was highly beneficial in that situation. If he did not have that knowledge, he would have probably been imprisoned and killed. Another lesson we learn here is that children of God are not supposed to limit themselves based on their original heritage. Paul did not limit himself to the original Jewish heritage. He did not choose to be born a Roman citizen but he did not denounce it. Instead, he embraced it and used it to get the rights that Roman citizens would get.

God's original idea for social interactions before sin was for the entire world to live as one community. Divisions predominantly came at the time when people were building the city and the tower of Babel. They were going against God's will. They wanted to build a city that would contain them and prevent them from being scattered to other parts of the world (Genesis 11:4). God gave Adam a command to multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28).

God wants everyone to travel the whole world. One reason God brought numerous languages is for those people (who wanted to be confined in that one city) to go all over the world (replenish the earth). However, since human beings are naturally sinful while many of them are enslaved in

sin, they took that opportunity to segregate themselves and create boundaries and borders. Therefore, cities and nations with borders were introduced.

For example, people speaking the Greek language would come together and form Greece. God always wants us to get out of our comfort zones and He is always championing for that. He desires us to make an effort in learning new languages because it is beneficial to know more than one language.

In His love, God has given some people the gift of speaking in tongues so that they can spread His message to the world. Tongues in this case means reasonable and logical languages (not some strange confusing language that the one speaking and the one listening do not understand). One may not be gifted with speaking in tongues but the beauty is anyone can ask God for that gift or for whatever gift He wishes to have. Solomon asked God for wisdom and understanding and God gave it to him.

It is good to ask God for the gifts which you admire that He has not naturally endowed you with. Do not listen to people who tell you that certain things you have to be born with. God may give them to you and He may fail to but if He fails, let it not be because you did not ask. I asked God for a singing voice and He gave it to me. I asked God for the gift of discernment and He gave it to me. Many things I have asked for, God has given me even in adulthood. I believe some of the things He has not given me yet, He will give me if I persist in asking. Even if He does not give me, it is still okay because He knows what is best for me. Not only was Paul knowledgeable on Roman Law and other education besides the Bible, but he could also speak in various tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18).

Paul's tongue speaking gift and knowledge on diverse subjects gave him the ability to break boundaries and reach more people with God's message. Someone may have a good message but fail to know how to reach an older audience because they do not have the knowledge of how to approach an older person. Therefore, that insufficiency in knowledge may block him from reaching people of an older audience.

Someone may have the right message but he does not know how to transmit it to the opposite gender or to a teenager or to someone from a different culture. Get out of your comfort zone and

try to socialize with as many people as possible. When you do this, you will learn on how to reach diverse people.

God tells us to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19). He does not specify on the people we should reach and teach. Therefore, make it your life aim to have the skills and capacity to teach everyone regardless of age, race, language, ethnicity, or any other dividing factor. Paul had knowledge and he embraced his Roman nationality but did not embrace the ungodly ways of the Romans.

As you travel and visit various cultures, embrace what is Godly in that culture that is not common in your culture. For example, two different times while walking on the way home, I met Islamic strangers (who have now become friends) who offered to assist me in carrying my luggage. I asked myself, "how comes I rarely see Christians doing that?" My friend and church mate Arnold does that all the time. I am trying to embrace that habit.

I once saw someone applauding my friend Dennis Nthumbi for picking up children around his residential area with his Range Rover and taking them to Sunday school. I do not go to the same church with Dennis, neither are we from the same Christian denomination. But I am trying to embrace that.

As a Christian, you are a universal citizen because you are a child of God, the Creator of the universe. This means that you have the entire universe as an inheritance. Your citizenship goes far beyond that which is written on your identification card or your passport. So, do not hold only to the citizenship of your heritage in the name of patriotism and fail to acquire others when given an opportunity. The only patriotism we are obliged to show is to God, not countries and tribes. Paul had multiple citizenships. His parents were Jewish, but he was born a Roman citizen. If he was not a Roman citizen, they would have imprisoned him. They did not imprison him because he was a Roman citizen.

Another thing we can see is that Paul tactfully disbursed that information. When the Jews were shouting that he should get killed, he did not tell them that he was a Roman citizen. After the centurion had him away from the Jews is when Paul told him. This shows us that we need to know whom to give what information to. Do not tell everything to everyone. Say the right things to the

right people. If he had said he was a Roman citizen, the Jews might have looked for another way to harm him. Paul used his Roman citizenship as his secret weapon on that day.

Imprisonment in Caesarea

Acts 24:1-27 (AMP) – "[1] Five days later, the high priest Ananias came down [from Jerusalem to Caesarea] with some elders and an attorney *named* Tertullus [acting as spokesman and counsel]. They presented to the governor their [formal] charges against Paul. [2] After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began the complaint [against him], saying *to the governor*: "Since through you we have attained great peace, and since by your foresight reforms are being carried out for this nation, [3] in every way and in every place, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with all gratitude. [4] But so that I do not weary you further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. [5] For we have found this man to be a public menace and one who instigates dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the [heretical] sect of the Nazarenes. [6] He even tried to desecrate the temple, but we took him into custody [and we intended to judge him by our Law, [7] but Lysias the commander came, and with great force took him out of our hands, [8] and ordered his accusers to come before you.] By interrogating him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to determine [the truth about] these things with which we charge him." [9] The Jews also joined in the attack, declaring *and* insisting that these things were so. [10] When the governor nodded for him to speak, Paul answered, "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I make my defense cheerfully *and* with good courage. [11] As you can easily verify, it has been no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. [12] Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor *elsewhere* in the city did they find me carrying on a discussion *or* disputing with anybody or causing a crowd to gather. [13] Nor can they present evidence to you to prove what they now bring against me. [14] But I confess this to you, that according to the Way, which they call a [divisive and heretical] sect, I do worship *and* serve the God of our fathers, [confidently] believing everything that is in accordance with the Law [of Moses] and that is written in the Prophets; [15] having [the same] hope in God which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of [the dead], both of the righteous and of the wicked. [16] In view of this, I also do my best *and* strive always to have a clear conscience before God and before men. [17] Now after several years I came [to Jerusalem] to bring to my people

charitable contributions and offerings. [18] They found me in the temple presenting these *offerings*, after I had undergone [the rites of] purification, without any crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor], [19] who ought to have been here before you to present their charges, if they have anything against me. [20] Or else let these men tell what crime they found [me guilty of] when I stood before the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), [21] other than for this one statement which I had shouted out as I stood among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.' [22] But Felix, having a rather accurate understanding about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." [23] Then he ordered the centurion to keep Paul in custody, but to let him have some freedom, and [he told the centurion] not to stop any of his friends from providing for his needs. [24] Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. [25] But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control [honorable behavior, personal integrity], and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for now, and when I find [a convenient] time I will send for you." [26] At the same time he was also hoping to get money from Paul [as a bribe]; so he continued to send for him quite often and talked with him. [27] But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded [in office] by Porcius Festus; and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."

In Acts 23:12-13 more than forty Jews came together and said that they would not eat or drink until they killed Paul. Learning of that conspiracy, Paul's nephew informs Paul, who sends him to the Roman commander to report the plot (Acts 23:16-17). The Roman commander is informed and concerned for Paul's safety, and arranges for Paul to be transferred to Governor Felix in Caesarea under heavy guard (Acts 23:18-24). A letter is sent along with Paul, explaining the situation and the charges against him (Acts 23:25-30). Paul is delivered to Felix and kept in Herod's palace under guard until his accusers arrive to present their case (Acts 23:31-35).

Five days later, Ananias the High Priest came down from Jerusalem to Caesarea together with an attorney named Tertullus (Acts 24:1). Jointly, they presented to Felix (the governor) their charges against Paul. When Paul was summoned, Tertullus began making accusations against Paul.

Tertullus accused Paul of being a public menace, instigating dissension among the all the Jews around the world. He accused Paul of being a ringleader of the heretical sect of the Nazarenes

(Acts 24:5). He also accused Paul of trying to desecrate the temple (Matthew 24:6). After Tertullus had said these things, the Jews joined in the attack saying that the accusations made against Paul were true (Acts 24:9).

The accusations against Paul were based on several incidents and misunderstandings, as detailed in earlier chapters of Acts:

Public Menace and Instigating Dissension: This accusation stems from Paul's extensive missionary journeys and preaching, which often led to controversy and sometimes disturbances in various cities. Jewish leaders perceived Paul's message about Jesus and the inclusion of Gentiles as disruptive to their traditions and authority.

Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes: This label aimed to portray Christianity as a heretical offshoot of Judaism. The term "Nazarenes" was used to describe followers of Jesus of Nazareth. By calling Paul a ringleader, they sought to emphasize that he was a key figure in this movement, which they viewed as a threat.

Desecrating the Temple: This accusation was based on a specific incident recorded in Acts 21:27-29. Some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the Temple and wrongly assumed he had brought Gentiles into the inner courts, which was prohibited. They had seen Paul earlier in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile, and mistakenly concluded that Paul had brought him into the Temple, causing a commotion.

Paul denied stirring up riots, stating that he had been in Jerusalem for only a short time and had not caused any disturbances in the Temple, synagogues, or the city (Acts 24:11-13). Paul admits to following "the Way" (an early term for Christianity) but emphasizes that this was in accordance with the Jewish faith and the Scriptures (Acts 24:14-15). Paul told Felix that he does his best and strives always to have a clear conscience before God and men (Acts 24:16).

As a Christian you should do your best to have a clear conscience before God and men. Majority of Christians do their best to have a clear conscience before men, very few do their best to have a clear conscience before God. This behavior shows a lack of faith. We do not care much about pleasing God because we do not see Him. We only care about pleasing men so that we can have a good reputation among them.

Some people will host parties at their homes or take their friends to restaurants but fail to return tithes and offerings. Some people will buy food on Sabbath for their friends or meet their business associates to discuss business, instead of keeping the Sabbath holy as God has commanded them. Pleasing God should always come first. Do not hide your Christianity to please your friends. When you hide your Christianity to please your friends, they might like you, but you will not have a clear conscience before God.

On the other hand, some people want to please God, but they disregard men. For example, one may lock themselves in their house praying and reading the Bible, but they do not want to join others in fellowship. Their worship is bound in selfishness while true worship needs to be bound on selflessness. It is a blessing to receive but it is more blessed to give than to receive. Attending church services and Bible study sessions with other people is giving. Participating in them is giving more. Strive to give more,

In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus told the expert of the law (who was testing him) what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus explained to the law expert who his neighbor was by giving him that story. He narrated how a man was attacked by robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and was left half dead on the road.

A priest came and saw him and left him there. A Levite did the same thing. Not only did they leave him, but they also passed by on the other side (Luke 10:31-32). The person who helped the man was a Samaritan (Luke 10:33-35). The priest and the Levite were allegedly people of God. However, they left the man on the road without helping him, probably because they were busy to go and conduct church duties. They tried to have a clear conscience before God without caring for their fellow men.

The men accusing Paul of going against religious practices wanting to kill him were trying to have a clear conscience before God in exchange for tormenting their fellow man. True love for God and man is inseparable, you cannot love one without loving the other.

Paul asserts that he was in the Temple to worship and bring offerings, not to profane it. He points out that he was ceremonially clean and was not causing any disruption when he was seized (Acts 24:17-18). Paul argues that his accusers cannot prove their charges and that his actions were in line with Jewish religious practices. He maintains that the only point of contention is his

proclamation of the resurrection of the dead, which was a divisive issue between the Pharisees and Sadducees within Judaism (Acts 24:20-21).

Felix had a good grasp of the early Christian movement, known as "The Way." He deferred deciding about Paul's case until Lysias, the Roman commander who had initially handled Paul's arrest, could be present to provide additional information (Acts 24:22).

Felix allowed Paul some degree of freedom while he was in custody, including access to his friends and resources (Acts 24:23). This was a relatively lenient sentence for a prisoner, and it indicated that Felix did not see Paul as a significant threat. Felix, accompanied by his Jewish wife Drusilla, invited Paul to speak to them. Paul took this opportunity to share his message about faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 24:24).

Paul treated God’s message with high level astuteness. He tried his best not to waste any single opportunity to spread the gospel. All Christians, of all ages, in all fields of work should do the same. Wherever you are and whatever situation you face, strive to spread God’s Word.

Paul’s discussion of righteousness, self-control, and future judgment made Felix uneasy or frightened. This discomfort led Felix to delay further discussion, indicating he was disturbed by the moral and ethical implications of Paul's message (Acts 24:25).

The truth sometimes makes people uneasy and frightened. However, its aim is not merely to make people feel uncomfortable. It aim is to make people gain comfort, thus, it bids them to change their ways. Felix did not want to change his ways. Therefore, he felt uneasy or frightened. Therefore, he delayed further discussions, indicating that he was disturbed by the message. By treating the truth as a locked gate instead of an open gate, he deliberately chose not to move by faith.

Felix’s frequent meetings with Paul were motivated by a desire for a bribe. He hoped Paul would offer money to secure his release, which was a common practice in the Roman legal system (Acts 24:26). Paul did not offer Felix a bribe. He truly acted like the light of the world. He did not care how long he was going to remain in prison, he only cared about shining God’s light to everybody including Felix the governor. After two years, Felix was replaced by Festus. Felix chose to leave Paul in prison, possibly to have favor with the Jewish leaders who were opposed to Paul, rather than making a final decision on the case (Acts 24:27).

Journey to Rome

On the journey to Rome, Paul faced several significant challenges and problems, as detailed in Acts 27:1-28:16. Here's a summary of those problems:

Setting Sail and Initial Difficulties

Acts 27:1-2 (AMP) - "[1] When it was determined that we would sail for Italy, they turned Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion of the Augustan Regiment named Julius. [2] And embarking on a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica."

Acts 27:4 (AMP) - "Putting out to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were against us."

Paul and his companions faced difficult sailing conditions and had to navigate against strong winds. The strong winds did not stop them, they kept on sailing.

Stormy Weather and Shipwreck

Acts 27:14 (AMP) – "But soon afterward a violent wind, called Euraquilo [a northeaster, a tempestuous windstorm like a typhoon], came rushing down from the island"

Acts 27:18 (AMP) - "Since we were exceedingly tossed about by the storm, the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard."

Acts 27:20 (AMP) - "Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."

Acts 27:27-29 (AMP) - "[27] But when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. [28] They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took

another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. [29] And fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocky coast, they let out four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak."

“For fourteen days they drifted under a sunless and starless heaven. The apostle, though himself suffering physically, had words of hope for the darkest hour, a helping hand in every emergency. He grasped by faith the arm of Infinite Power, and his heart was stayed upon God. He had no fears for himself; he knew that God would preserve him to witness at Rome for the truth of Christ. But his heart yearned with pity for the poor souls around him, sinful, degraded, and unprepared to die. As he earnestly pleaded with God to spare their lives, it was revealed to him that his prayer was granted.” - Acts of the Apostles, Page 442.2, Ellen G. White.

“Taking advantage of a lull in the tempest, Paul stood forth on the deck and, lifting up his voice, said: “Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.”” - Acts of the Apostles, Page 443.1, Ellen G. White.

“At these words, hope revived. Passengers and crew roused from their apathy. There was much yet to be done, and every effort within their power must be put forth to avert destruction.” - Acts of the Apostles, Page 443.2, Ellen G. White.

When the south wind blew softly, they thought that they had obtained their goal. Therefore, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, hugging the coast (Acts 27:13). Soon afterward a violent wind, called Euraquilo [a northeaster, a tempestuous windstorm like a typhoon], came rushing down from the island.

When the ship was caught in the wind and they could not head against the wind [to gain stability], they gave up and were driven along (Acts 27:15). When you see your efforts are fruitless, relax and let God take control. In some situations, there is nothing you can do. Therefore, do not stress yourself to do what you cannot do. Let God navigate the ship.

They ran under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, and with great difficulty they were able to get the ship's skiff on the deck and secure it (Acts 27:16). After hoisting the skiff [on board], they used support lines [for frapping] to undergird and brace the ship's hull; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis [off the north coast of Africa], they let down the sea anchor and lowered the sails and were driven along [backwards with the bow into the wind] (Acts 27:17).

On the next day, as they were being violently tossed about by the storm [and taking on water], they began to jettison the cargo (Acts 27:18). On the third day they threw the ship's tackle (spare lines, blocks, miscellaneous equipment) overboard with their own hands [to further reduce the weight] (Acts 27:19). Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm kept raging about them, from then on, all hope of them being saved was [growing worse and worse and] gradually abandoned (Acts 27:20).

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1, ESV). When you embark on God's mission by faith, you are hoping for good things that the Word of God promises. You start getting discouraged when you encounter bad things. This may make you question your mission sometimes, whether it is right or wrong. Your faith and hope get more shaken when things keep on getting worse instead of getting better. You commit yourself to God as you are trusting Him for a job. The job you are looking for might fail to come immediately.

Sometimes, you will realize that the closer you are moving to God the more your financial situation gets worse, getting more rejections when applying to jobs and things in your life are just going the opposite of your expectations. Such a situation is what Paul faced when he kept on encountering large storms with the sun, moon and stars not appearing for many days.

A severe storm, known as the Northeaster, caused great distress, and the ship was in imminent danger of being wrecked. The crew threw cargo overboard to lighten the ship, and there was a loss of hope for survival. In Acts 27:27-29 Paul, along with other prisoners, were transported to Rome by ship under the guard of a Roman centurion named Julius. During the voyage, they encountered a violent storm that lasted many days, leading to a desperate situation.

Acts 27:27 talks about the fourteenth night. This indicates that the storm had been raging for two weeks, a considerable time at sea, highlighting the intensity and duration of their ordeal. The

Adriatic Sea refers to the central Mediterranean area, not just the modern Adriatic Sea between Italy and the Balkans. The experienced sailors sensed they were nearing land. This could have been due to changes in the sound of the waves, the smell of the air, or other nautical signs.

In Acts 27:28 it states that they took sounding. This was a method used by sailors to measure the depth of the water by dropping a weighted line marked at intervals into the sea. One fathom is six feet. Initially, the depth was 120 feet (20 fathoms), and then it decreased to 90 feet (15 fathoms), indicating they were getting closer to shore.

In Acts 27:29, the decreasing depth suggested they were near land, but in the darkness, they couldn't see well enough to navigate safely. The fear was that they would crash into rocks or reefs. Anchors were dropped from the back of the ship to slow down and stabilize it, preventing it from being driven onto the rocks by the storm. They hoped for daylight to better assess their situation and navigate to safety.

The crew's actions reflect their desperation and determination to survive. Despite the terrifying circumstances, they took practical steps to prevent disaster. Their actions show faith in action. Throughout Acts 27, it's evident that Paul had faith in God's promise that he would reach Rome. His calmness and assurance likely influenced and encouraged those around him. The passage illustrates the balance between human effort (the sailors' actions) and divine protection (Paul's faith in God's promise). It highlights that in times of crisis, faith is crucial.

Shipwreck and Survival

Acts 27:41 (AMP) - "But striking a sandbar where two seas met, the ship ran aground; and the bow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to break up due to the force of the waves."

Acts 27:44 (AMP) - "And the soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, stopped them from their intention and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest should follow, some on planks and others on various things from the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land."

The ship ran aground and began to break apart. The soldiers initially planned to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape, but Paul's centurion intervened, ensuring everyone's safety.

Arrival on Malta and Further Challenges

Acts 28:1-6 (AMP) - "[1] After we were safe [on land], we found out that the island was called Malta. [2] And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness *and* hospitality; for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, since it had begun to rain and was cold. [3] But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper crawled out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. [4] When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, Justice [the avenging goddess] has not permitted him to live." [5] Then Paul [simply] shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. [6] But they stood watching *and* expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and *began* saying that he was a god."

In Malta, Paul and the other prisoners were warmly invited by the inhabitants. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper crawled out because of the heat and bit him, fastening itself on his hand. When the natives saw that, they thought that Paul encountered that snake because he was a murderer and he was going to face judgment and die as a result of his evil actions.

Normally, when people see something evil happening to you, they think it is a result of something wrong that you have done. Facing affliction, especially as a Christian, can be tough. People will question the God you worship. Some may lose faith and hope in God once they see the problems you are facing. When people see you going through financial struggles as a Christian, most people will assume that you are lazy (waiting for manna from heaven). You might be working so hard, but people will not see it because they cannot see the results.

Once you get married and you fail to have children, most people will assume that you are on a curse. As a lady, some might think that you have had so many previous abortions, that is why you are not able to give birth. In cases where a couple fails to have children, most of the time the lady is the one who usually gets judged even though the man might be the problem.

I believe that is why (most times) when God wants to transition His chosen person from a low rank to a higher rank, He takes them through a wilderness experience like He did with the Israelites. God does not want people to get embarrassed. Satan is the one who wants you to encounter shame.

God takes them through the wilderness (a place of isolation) so that they may grow spiritually. Because that experience is not always pleasant (since learning is not always exciting). He does not want others to see the problems that His people are going through. Therefore, He isolates them. He may not take everyone through an experience of isolation. Sometimes God may allow people to see the problems that you are going through so that they can witness Him lifting you.

John 9:1-3 (NIV) – "[1] As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. [2] His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

The disciples thought that the man was born blind because either he or his parents sinned. We have been wired to base our beliefs on bad things happening only to those who do evil as a repayment for their sins. While this is largely true, it is not always true. Sometimes, bad things can happen to decent people. Jesus told His disciples that the blind man and his parents' sin was not the reason why the man was born blind. The reason the man was born blind was for the works of God to be displayed in him.

God knew what the inhabitants of Malta were thinking concerning Paul. Therefore, He had to ensure that He turns Paul's shame to fame so that His name gets glorified. They were secretly waiting for him to die when they saw the snake on him. People like to assume that they can accurately predict your life.

Some might see you being financially broke and think that is how your life is going to end. Some might see you failing in school and think you will end up as a failure. Some might see you being single and think that you will die single. Some might see you abusing drugs and alcohol and think that your life will end up in havoc. God wants to prove all these people wrong. That is why He keeps on calling you to come to Him. After they waited for Paul to die, Paul surprised them by not dying. They ended up saying that Paul was a god. God will surprise those people who are looking down on you when you go to Him and stick with Him.

Arrival in Rome and Final Issues

Acts 28:16 (AMP) - "When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself [in rented quarters] with the soldier who was guarding him."

While Paul was allowed to live in relative freedom in Rome, he was still under guard and awaiting further legal proceedings.

In summary, Paul's journey to Rome was marked by severe weather, shipwreck, survival challenges, and the initial local misunderstanding of his situation on Malta. Despite these trials, Paul remained steadfast in his mission and continued to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ.

Imprisoned Frequently

2 Corinthians 11:23 (AMP) – "Are they [self-proclaimed] servants of Christ?—I am speaking as if I were out of my mind—I am more so [for I exceed them]; with far more labors, with far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, and often in danger of death."

Paul questions the false prophets and deceitful workers who were challenging Paul's authority by claiming to be servants of Jesus Christ. Paul is highlighting the affliction he has gone through by being a servant of Christ. One of them is being denied his freedom as he was imprisoned frequently.

Christ is the only one who gives you freedom and He gives you that freedom through His Word. The Devil will try to steal that freedom from you and he will be successful only if you allow him. The prison walls could not deprive Paul of the freedom that Christ had given him. They would throw him in prison to stop him from spreading God's message.

Paul would take that opportunity to spread God's message to the people in prison. The prison cells could not stop Paul from glorifying and praising God. People thought that Paul would stop spreading God's message once they killed him. After killing him, Paul's letters spread faster and further. The letter to the Corinthians is no longer the letter to the Corinthians, it is a letter to all of us. The letters to the saints at Ephesus and Philippi are no longer letters to them because they are now dead, they are letters to all of us.

In other words, Paul's writings have spread to all nations and to all generations. By denying Paul the freedom to preach, they ended up giving Paul more freedom. Attempting to render Paul's efforts fruitless resulted in their own efforts being fruitless while Paul's efforts became more fruitful. Whoever is used by Satan to render your efforts fruitless will make your efforts more fruitful.

Whipped with 39 Lashes

2 Corinthians 11:24 (AMP) – "[24] Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent adrift on the sea."

Paul was beaten with thirty-nine lashes, five times. Three times he was beaten with rods and stoned once. He was shipwrecked three times and spent a night and a day adrift on the sea. Receiving forty lashes was a standard Jewish punishment, according to Deuteronomy 25:3. The lashes were not to exceed forty at a go. Therefore, in a bid not to go beyond forty, they gave Paul thirty-nine lashes.

Deuteronomy 25:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. [2] And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. [3] Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee."

In many African countries and in some other parts of the world, it is quite common to see children being beaten for mistakes they have made. It used to be the same in Western (European) society till laws got changed and corporal punishment was prohibited. However, in most of those instances, the beatings are usually as a result of love, especially when it is from the parents to the children. However, it is rare to see a parent or a teacher beating a child thirty-nine lashes.

I have never seen a parent stoning a child. Paul's punishments were severe because they were driven by hate and not by love. They were aiming to kill him. Therefore, they would be happy if

he died. The reason why schools and parents beat children is for them not to repeat the mistakes that they had done. Once you get beaten, you would feel the pain and when you remember how painful that beating was, you will be afraid to do that mistake again.

In class eight (called grade eight or year eight in some countries) we would get beaten in school if we would have lower marks than the marks we had the previous exams. We were told to chant 'No dropping' and we would get beaten while we chanted 'no dropping.' In some school subjects, one would get beaten for failing what the teacher would term as an easy question even though that person passed the entire exam paper.

Prior to doing the final exam paper at the end of the year (known as Kenya Certificate of Primary Education), meant to transition us to secondary school, I had counted how many lashes I was left with before finishing primary school. It was around January when I was counting the lashes left and we were finishing class eight in November. The lashes remaining ranged from one hundred to three hundred. The lashes were somehow beneficial because they would make one work harder and have good behavior.

The Late Pop Star Michael Jackson said that his father would beat them thoroughly while they were practicing as the Jackson five if they made a mistake during practice. I guess those beatings resulted in them enhancing their singing skills. I'm not saying corporal punishment is the solution. What I am saying is, punishments have been used on people to make them alter their course of action.

Therefore, when the Jews gave Paul thirty-nine lashes five times, they were expecting him to stop spreading the gospel. Paul's drive was so relentless that he did not stop. He kept on spreading the gospel. Instead of stopping him, the thirty-nine lashes motivated him to continue with God's mission.

Exodus 20:8 (KJV) says, "Remember the Sabbath day."

The same commandment, Exodus 20:11 tells us that God created the universe in six days. The vast universe created by God shows His expansive love. No man has been able to fully explore heaven and earth. In other words, no man has been able to fully explore God's love. Therefore, when the Bible tells us to remember the Sabbath day. We should always remember God's love as we should always remember the Sabbath.

Paul remembered God's love more than he remembered the pain and suffering that were caused by the thirty-nine lashes that were generously awarded to him five times. When embarking on your God-given purpose, you ought to remember the love of God more than you remember the small pain that you are encountering. The pain you are going through may seem big but when compared to God's love, it is very small. Therefore, remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

Perils and Hardships

2 Corinthians 11:26-29 (AMP) – "[26] Many times on journeys, [exposed to] danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own countrymen, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger on the sea, danger among those posing as believers; [27] in labor and hardship, often unable to sleep, in hunger and thirst, often [driven to] fasting [for lack of food], in cold and exposure [without adequate clothing]. [28] Besides those external things, there is the daily [inescapable] pressure of my concern for all the churches. [29] Who is weak, and I do not feel [his] weakness? Who is made to sin, and I am not on fire [with sorrow and concern]?"

Paul lists the various external dangers and hardships he faced. While evangelizing, he encountered danger everywhere. No place and no group of people seemed completely safe for him. He would encounter danger on the sea and danger on land.

Paul would encounter danger from unbelievers and danger from those posing as believers (who are always more than the true believers). Paul would encounter danger from foreigners and danger from his own compatriots. He would encounter danger from bandits and danger from seemingly decent people. That is what the world feels like for a genuine child of God.

James 4:4 (KJV) - "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

As a child of God, you cannot be friends with the world. You can be friends with people of the world but you cannot be friends with the ways of the world. As the light of the world, you should know that darkness does not welcome light as it is always in conflict with light. Light has to intentionally shine in darkness to overcome that unwelcoming darkness. As the salt of the earth,

you are to add flavor to the earth. You should know that tasteless food in itself feels that it is okay and nothing needs to be added to it. However, when salt is added to it, the food becomes tastier to the taster.

The darkness that has clouded the world will constantly fight your light. The good news is that no matter how great the darkness is, it will not defeat your light unless you shut down your light. As I am writing this, my bulb light is on because I need extra light. It will stay on until I switch it off. The dangers you face in this world as a child of God may scare you, but they should not stop you. The world is not safe but when you dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the almighty, be rest assured that you are secure.

In 2 Corinthians 11:28, Paul says that despite the external danger being a lot and seemingly strong, the concern (internal care) that he has for the churches is more. 1 John 4:4 (KJV) - "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world." Christ in you is greater than all the external forces. Where is Christ? Do you need to travel a long distance to look for Christ? Revelation 3:20 (KJV) - "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Christ is right at the door of your heart. You need to welcome Christ to dwell in you. Jesus is a gentleman. He does not enter by force. He enters by invitation. When Christ is in you, His Word shall abide in you. When Christ abides in you and His Word abides in you, you shall have internal power that is stronger than all the external forces. Nothing shall stop you because Satan cannot stop God's Word for it is God's Word that created Satan.

Treated with Contempt

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (AMP) – "[7] Or did I [perhaps] sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted and honored, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? [8] I robbed other churches by accepting [more than their share of] financial support for my ministry to you. [9] And when I was with you and ran short [financially], I did not burden any of you; for what I needed was fully supplied by the brothers (Silas and Timothy) who came from Macedonia (the church at Philippi). So I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. [10] As

the truth of Christ is in me, my boast [of independence] will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia (southern Greece)."

In the above passage, Paul was speaking to the Corinthians (the people at Corinth). Corinth was an important city in ancient Greece. It was renowned for its wealth, commerce, philosophy, and strategic military position. It was also known for its vibrant cultural life. It was a melting pot of various cultures, making it a diverse and cosmopolitan city. During the classical period (5^{th} – 4^{th} Centuries BC), Corinth was known for its artistic and architectural contributions, including the development of the Corinthian order of classical architecture.

Ancient Corinth would be likened to modern day Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the city of Athens in Greece. Dubai, Singapore, and Hong Kong share similarities in terms of their economic significance, strategic locations, and roles as major trade and commercial hubs. Athens, as a historical counterpart, reflects the cultural and historical legacy of ancient Corinth within the context of modern Greece.

The city of Corinth was famous for its temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, and it was known for its licentious and hedonistic lifestyle, which earned it a reputation of moral laxity. I believe that is why Paul wrote the famous love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13 so as to guide the Corinthians on what true love is and do away with the false beliefs that they had about love in their traditions.

Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC but rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Thus, it became a Roman colony. It flourished as a major city in the Roman Empire and retained its commercial significance. The population was diverse, consisting of Romans, Greeks, and other ethnic groups, contributing to a rich cultural and social tapestry. Corinth was famous for hosting the isthmian games, one of the major Panhellenic festivals of ancient Greece, second only to the Olympics in importance. These games featured athletic and musical competitions.

The church in Corinth was established by Apostle Paul during his second missionary journey, around AD 50-52. Paul spent about 18 months in Corinth, teaching and preaching the gospel, as detailed in Acts 18. The congregation was diverse, comprising Jews, Greeks, Romans, and people from various social classes. This diversity sometimes led to significant challenges within the

church. Corinth's cosmopolitan nature and diverse population presented both opportunities and challenges for spreading the gospel.

The Corinthians struggled with various moral and ethical issues, including divisions, immorality, and disputes over spiritual gifts. 1st and 2nd Corinthians provide valuable insights into the early Christian community's struggles, including divisions, immorality, disputes over spiritual gifts and questions about doctrine. There were factions within the church, with numbers aligning themselves with different leaders (Paul, Apollos, and Cephas). Paul urged them to stop those divisions and be united in Christ.

The Church had misunderstandings and abuses of spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues and prophecy. Paul provides guidance on the proper use of these gifts in 1 Corinthians from chapter 12 to 14. In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed various issues within the church, including immorality, lawsuits among believers, marriage, and the proper use of spiritual gifts. Paul defends his apostleship, expresses his love and concern for the Corinthians, and addresses their repentance and reconciliation. He discusses his sufferings and the nature of true Christian ministry.

Keeping this context in mind, let's reread 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. In the text (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Paul asks the Corinthians a rhetorical question. He asked them if he sinned when he humbled himself by preaching God's gospel free of charge. Some members of the Corinthian church were critical of Paul and questioned his authority as an apostle. They compared him unfavorably to other apostles and teachers who had come to Corinth and who perhaps presented themselves in a more impressive or authoritative manner. These critics, sometimes referred to as "super-apostles," accused Paul of being weak, unimpressive in speech, and questioned his legitimacy because he did not demand financial support like other teachers.

Human beings carry a false belief that good things are always hard to find and extremely costly. I believe that is why some Jews who were used to offering costly animal sacrifices found it hard to believe in Jesus. Jesus' death and resurrection put an end to all those costly animal sacrifices. The goal is more important than the cost and the technicality it takes to achieve that goal. If there is an easier but legal and moral way to achieve it easily, use that option.

For example, if your goal is to reach a certain physical destination and you find driving an automatic vehicle or using a driverless vehicle easier than using a manual car, go ahead and use

that automatic or driverless vehicle. No one will give you an award for reaching there using a more complex vehicle to drive unless it is a race competition for manual vehicles. If you want to design something and what you want to design can be designed by a tool that is simpler to use than the old traditional design tools, go ahead and use it.

While some people are busy fighting positive change, others have embraced it and have reached their desired goals easily. For example, while some people are still finding it hard to embrace artificial intelligence, others have embraced it and are producing more output than before, and making more money than before.

I encourage the people who work in my company to use artificial intelligence where they can use it. For example, instead of spending a long-time writing thousands of lines of code, they can use it to do a faster and more efficient work. But, many members in my teams are still finding it hard to adapt to the new technology.

My goal is to produce more in a short time span and bless more people. Wanting something that is difficult to get has caused many people to get into bad relationships and to fall into scams. You try so hard to get the attention of someone who is not interested in you or who is using manipulative tactics on you because you think they have so much to offer by virtue of how they treat you. Ever since you were born you have been deceived to believe that good things do not come easily. Therefore, you automatically assume something is good because it is hard to obtain.

In an interview with Spice FM radio, Leah Okero, the Kenya Country Director for Village Enterprise (a Non-Governmental Organization which helps the poorest people in African countries start businesses) said, “I find this story sad at the same time funny. As narrated by our business mentors, when they get into the village, sometimes those people run away from them because they are thinking this program is too good to be true.”

Village Enterprise has a program where they go deep into African villages, particularly marginalized areas. They use local mentors to train people on entrepreneurship and they give them money in form of grants to start businesses. Since the people in some of those areas are accustomed to life being difficult, when they are approached with that program, they think it is too good to be true. Therefore, they run away.

Adam and Eve had the Tree of Life right in the midst of the garden but they chose to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. From the beginning of the world, even before sin, we can see that it is a common thing for people to run away from the good and go to the bad.

Some people know this. Therefore, they pretend to be hard to find so that you may be psychologically and subconsciously manipulated to think that they have so much to offer. Many scammers use this tactic. Many women are stuck in abusive relationships because of that. Many men have wasted a lot of money and time trying to impress the lady of their dreams while the lady does not like them back.

Adam did not do anything to get Eve and Eve did not do anything to get Adam. God gave them to each other free of charge. Adam was busy obeying God's commandments, living in the purpose that God had given him when God saw that it was not good for him to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

When Abraham's faithful servant Eleazar was sent to look for a wife for Isaac, he did not tell God to give him what is hard to obtain. He asked God to give him someone who would give him and his camels water to drink. In other words, someone who kept God's commandments. Everything was meant to be easy. Sin is what caused everything to be hard. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He came to restore.

By the power of Jesus, what was previously hard has been restored and has been made to be easy. While some people are still finding it hard to believe in Jesus because it seems so easy, others have made good use of that opportunity and have inherited eternal life as a result. The Corinthians could not believe that such a message is given to them free of charge. The best preachers are not always the most flamboyant ones and the richest ones. They can be humble and modest looking people. People might ignore them because they do not display a flashy lifestyle and are easy to access.

The inhabitants of Corinth had sunk deep in sin because of their practices. They were used to everything in their glamorous city being expensive, as is the same case today, with beautiful ultra-modern cities because that is the way the world functions. The world functions that way because sin has made every good thing difficult to get. Riches are difficult to get for most people. Good quality secular education is difficult to get. Simple scientific principles are presented with complex terms, making it difficult to understand them. Mathematical calculations appear to be so difficult just by looking at them and they are taught in a way that makes them seem complex.

Matthew 5:8 (KJV) – “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Purity of mind/heart shall make us see things that are not easily seen or have never been seen, the same way it will make you see God who has never been seen (John 1:18, 1 John 4:12). Purity of mind will make you see things that are hidden. Mysteries will be revealed to you. The good news is God is the only one who can make your mind pure.

When your mind is made pure, you will be able to understand things that you did not understand before. Therefore, the most technical science will be extremely easy for you to grasp. The reason why you do not understand some things is because your mind is not fully pure. The reason why you have a poor memory is because you have an impure mind. As God purifies the mind, the mind is uplifted so that its capacity can reach to infinite heights, as heaven is from earth. When your mind is purified, it will be highly productive.

More people will be blessed by your service as you will provide the highest quality service and material riches are going to come easily (even though that should not be your goal when seeking God to purify your mind). Lack of confidence and lack of self-esteem are caused by an impure mind. Purity of mind will boost your confidence and self-esteem. The city of Corinth was built by people who were infiltrated and saturated with impurities in their minds as the majority of them did not know God. Therefore, they had to work so hard to get material wealth which they used to build that magnificent city.

The scarcity of access to resources in that city caused most things to be very expensive. One determining factor on the price of a commodity is the rarity of that comm. Thus, the rarer something is, the more expensive it is. People who have embraced the world, do not know where God has placed His resources since God is the Creator of the world and they are far from Him. Since the Devil loves no one, he cannot show them where those resources are.

Satan has nothing to give. He pretends to give them in exchange of their lives or the lives of their loved ones or both. In fact, those whom the Devil pretends to give are those who have knowingly made a covenant with him. He pretends to give them while he takes back more than what he gave them. However, not many people have made a covenant with the Devil, they just serve him unknowingly. By serving Satan either knowingly or unknowingly, you subject yourself to a life of oppression.

The Corinthians were used to this oppression. The false teachers who came to them did nothing much to get them out of that oppression. They made the gospel too expensive for them to access. They took advantage of their wealth and charged them money in exchange for the gospel. Paul saw this and aimed to free them from that oppression. Therefore, he brought the gospel to them free of charge.

Some could hear that Paul was a better teacher and preacher than the ones they knew but could not understand why he was not charging them for that gospel. In this age, we have preachers who charge expensive fees for their events and price their books highly.

People think that whatever they are offering is the best because what they are offering is extravagantly priced. That is not always the case. There are many good materials that can be accessed at very low costs. For example, one can access numerous versions of the Bible on the internet for free. One can access books by Ellen G. White on the internet for free or through the Ellen G. White mobile application. One can access YouTube sermons by genuine preachers like Pastor Randy Skeete on the internet for free.

It is best when preachers offer their services for free so that they can access more people. However, it is not bad when they charge for certain services they conduct. Some churches offered Paul money to preach to them. However, a preacher should not be governed by money. Instead, he should be governed by the love of the people of God and he should be willing to go to great lengths to give them the light that will take them out of darkness.

Paul did not refuse when the churches offered him money. He accepted that money and used that money to minister to some churches free of charge. For example, the church at Corinth. Out of their own will, other churches gave him more than he expected. He did not ask them for it, they just gave him. However, there are others that might have given him less than he expected but he did not complain. He was also willing to go and preach to others free of charge and he would offer them the same quality of service that he gave the ones paying him money.

Pastor Anthony Mwangi, also known as Pastor T, said that when he was a gospel musician, he was invited to sing free of charge in a certain church. He said even though that church did not give him money, that was where he met his wife. How much money would one compare to such a gift? People have spent lots of money in a bid to get the right spouse but still they have not been able

to. You never know the blessing that awaits you when doing God's work. Do not hesitate to go where God tells you to go.

2 Corinthians 11:9 (AMP) - "And when I was with you and ran short [financially], I did not burden any of you; for what I needed was fully supplied by the brothers (Silas and Timothy) who came from Macedonia (the church at Philippi). So I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so."

Paul said that when he ran short financially as he was with the people of Corinth, he did not burden them. What he needed was fully supplied by the brothers Silas and Timothy who came from the church at Philippi in Macedonia. He tried his best not to be a burden to them. As a Christian, try your best not to be a burden to others because Jesus is not a burden to you.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:30 (KJV) – "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Jesus' burden is lighter than the lightest feather. His yoke is easier than a,e,i,o,u, the vowels of the alphabet. Therefore, do your best to make association with you to be ultra-easy. Go the extra mile in giving the best service in whatever line of service God has called you to.

Matthew 5:41 (KJV) – "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Pastor Randy Skeete said that, when invited into a home to live with the inhabitants of the home while on mission, he would wash his plate after he ate. Do more than what you are called to do and what you are expected to do. Many people do not do that because they think others will think lowly of them if they do that. You should care more about what God thinks of you than what others think of you.

Plot to Kill Paul

Acts 9:23-25 (AMP) – "[23] After considerable time had passed [about three years or so], the Jews plotted together to kill him, [24] but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the city's gates day and night so they could kill him; [25] but his disciples took him at night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket."

Acts 23:12-24 (AMP) – "[12] Now when day came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath (curse), saying that they would not eat or drink until they had killed

Paul. [13] There were more than forty [men] who formed this plot [and swore this oath]. [14] They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath not to taste anything [neither food nor drink] until we have killed Paul. [15] So now you, along with the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), notify the commander to bring Paul down to you, as if you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly. But we are ready to kill him before he comes near [the place].” [16] But the son of Paul’s sister heard of their [planned] ambush, and he went to the barracks and told Paul. [17] Then Paul, calling in one of the centurions, said, “Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him.” [18] So he took him and led him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called for me and asked me to bring this young man to you, because he has something to tell you.” [19] The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to ask him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” [20] And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) tomorrow, as if they were going to interrogate him more thoroughly. [21] But do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him, and they have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. Even now they are ready, just waiting for your promise.” [22] So the commander let the young man leave, instructing him, “Do not tell anyone that you have given me this information.” [23] Then summoning two of the centurions, he said, “Have two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night (9:00 p.m.) to go as far as Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen; [24] also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.”

In these two texts (Acts 9:23-25 and Acts 23:12-24), the Jews plotted to kill Paul. In Acts 9:23-25, the Jews plot to kill Paul does not succeed as Paul gets helped by his disciples to escape that dangerous plan. Paul’s disciples took him at night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket. As prayerful as he was, Paul did not help himself. He was helped by his disciples. His disciples mean his followers. It means his mentees. Here we see the beauty of fellowship and the bountiful fruits of mentorship.

Paul was of great help to his disciples as he fellowshipped with them and mentored them. He benefited them greatly through teaching them God’s Word and engaging with them to carry out God’s service. You might have mentored many people but one new person comes to you to get mentored. Do not neglect them. Do not shun them away and comfort yourself that you have already

mentored enough people. No matter how much you have done, as long as you are alive, what you have done is never enough. It is only God who can decide whether what you have done is enough or not. You cannot make this decision by yourself.

Sometimes, people may come to us to get help or mentorship and we see them as a bother because we want to spend a peaceful life minding our own business. You should not mind your own business. Instead, you should mind God's business because God's business is your business. God's business does not revolve around you. It revolves around others.

Carefully evaluating my life, I decided to pay close attention to those people who show me love even though I may not be naturally inclined to them. God has taught me, there is a reason why you really love some people and there is a reason why some people really love you. Both are meant to benefit you.

Snubbing people who are inclined to you because you are not inclined to them and you do not see how they are going to benefit you, is a very narrow and shallow way of viewing life. A lady may be interested in you as a man, don't snub her or treat her badly because you are not interested in her. Talk to her and treat her with respect. Help her where you can. Find how the two of you can benefit each other. If she asks you to be her man, communicate to her gently that you do not share the same interest.

The same should also apply when a man is interested in a lady who is not interested in him. The man may not be your type. Do not treat him with contempt because he is not your type. He may be leading you to the one who is your type. He may be leading you to doors of the most coveted blessings that you are constantly praying for.

I intentionally chose to be attentive to those people who show me love. This is because through careful consideration, I realized that those people who I did not expect to benefit me ended up being the most beneficial people in my life. I believe it is the same with you. Those people who have helped you the most are those who you did not expect to receive help from. I am trying to perfect this trait because I have still not been able to fully perfect it due to the carnality that is in me.

I got the grand ideas of EduPollz (an academic survey software) and WukPollz (an industry survey software) through interaction with Dr. Godwin Kisero, a man who I met in a bus while heading

home. At that time, I did not even know he has the Doctor title as he is a PhD holder. I did not know that he was going to assist me in my business because the conversation was quite casual and fun.

Burhan Abdallah used to greet me all the time in my neighborhood. I would respond to his greetings and this would go on for years. We were just casual friends and I never knew when he would help me or if at all he would help me. His help came in handy when he taught me various things concerning driving and simple vehicle mechanics. He taught me how to park a car in reverse. He also taught me how to change a car tire among other things. All these he taught me free of charge.

I met another friend called Abdullahi in 2018 at the Blue Economy Conference that was held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi, Kenya. After the Governor of Mombasa County (at the time) Hassan Ali Joho had finished speaking, Abdullahi approached me and requested if I can take a photo of him with the governor. He made this request to me because I had a smartphone and he had none at the time. Even though he was a stranger, I agreed. Afterward, he ended up giving me numerous helpful connections and giving me lots of businesses in the Information Technology sector.

“The Hebrews had entered Canaan, but they had not subdued it; and to human appearance the struggle to gain possession of the land must be long and difficult. It was inhabited by a powerful race, who stood ready to oppose the invasion of their territory. The various tribes were bound together by the fear of a common danger. Their horses and iron battle chariots, their knowledge of the country, and their training in war, would give them great advantage. Furthermore, the country was guarded by fortresses—“cities great and fenced up to heaven.” Deuteronomy 9:1. Only in the assurance of a strength not their own could the Israelites hope for success in the impending conflict.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 487.1, Ellen G. White.

"God had made it their privilege and their duty to enter the land at the time of His appointment, but through their willful neglect that permission had been withdrawn. Satan had gained his object in preventing them from entering Canaan; and now he urged them on to do the very thing, in the face of the divine prohibition, which they had refused to do when God required it. Thus the great deceiver gained the victory by leading them to rebellion the second time. They had distrusted the power of God to work with their efforts in gaining possession of Canaan; yet now they presumed

upon their own strength to accomplish the work independent of divine aid. “We have sinned against the Lord,” they cried; “we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us.” Deuteronomy 1:41. So terribly blinded had they become by transgression. The Lord had never commanded them to “go up and fight.” It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands." - Patriarchs and Prophets, Page 392.3, Ellen G. White.

People struggle as a result of not listening to God’s voice. One thing that God is telling you now is that you need to help others. You will receive more aid if you help more people. This does not mean that you should expect the people whom you have helped to help you back. It doesn't always happen that way. God is the one who will recompense you and He may use other people to help you.

Being kind to others is a Biblical way of helping someone. One of the best ways to help people is by teaching them God’s Word because God’s Word is all they need. God’s Word has solutions to all their problems and your problems too. The beauty about teaching God’s Word is you can teach everyone who is willing because nobody has the monopoly of truth. No human being or angel can say they know and understand the Bible fully.

I view it as a highly blessed opportunity to be a teacher of the Word of God. Through reading my blog, Jared Okoth (a fellow teacher at Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church) has really come in handy in helping me in several ways. He shows me profound respect and presents me with opportunities to minister. Whenever I need someone to tag along when going to minister, I can call him, and he is always willing to help. One day Jared gave me a call to wish me a happy birthday.

When Jared called, he said that if I was in Kenya he would have made for me a birthday cake (at that time I was outside the country). He said, he can still make it and give it to my friends in church. He asked me of the friends I would want to take the cake too. I told him to take it to Real Time Class (the thirteen to fifteen-year-old class). This is because Real Time was the last class that I taught in that church before moving abroad.

Jared did that and the teens were so grateful. No one knew that he was the one who incurred the cost. He made it look like I was the one who bought it. I have received many great benefits from

people to whom I have ministered like Abel Mokua, Esther Argwings and many others. Time would fail me to mention all here.

I have directly mentored various people career wise. I cannot list them all. I have also mentored a few teenagers and children in church. All my mentees, together with their families have proved to be a wonderful blessing to me. I have received innumerable blessings and privileges both material and spiritual through sharing God's Word and mentoring people.

Persecution in Antioch of Pisidi

Acts 13:50 (AMP) – "But the Jews incited the devout, prominent women and the leading men of the city, and instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them forcibly out of their district."

Many people would prefer if one person goes against them rather than when a whole group of people gangs up against them. One influential person or a few people can incite many people against you and an entire community ends up hating you. We see this happening among politicians. A politician can incite an entire community against another politician by using false accusations and people will believe.

Therefore, it is important to do proper research before you believe an accusation. Secondly, the body of Christ is a body of love. No matter what one has done, we have no reason to hate them. We have no reason not to help them when they come for help. We have no reason not to forgive them whether they seek for forgiveness or not.

The Jews incited the devout, prominent people of the city of Antioch against Paul and Barnabas causing them to be driven out of the city. Paul and Barnabas knew that the Jews were against them and they probably knew that they would incite people against them but that did not stop them from doing God's work. Being driven out of the city did not stop them from ministering for they went ahead to minister to other cities.

Small opposition has caused many to stop the work that Jesus Christ has given to them. I was banned from WhatsApp three times for excessive sharing of my blog articles. I did not give up, I joined telegram and opened two accounts with two phone numbers. In one of the accounts, I was

recently banned from posting in groups. I am still posting in the groups in the other account. If I get banned too, God will provide another alternative.

Persecution in Iconium

Acts 14:5-6 (AMP) – "[5] When there was an attempt by both the Gentiles and the Jews, together with their rulers, to shamefully mistreat and to stone them, [6] they, aware of the situation, escaped to Lystra and Derbe, [taking refuge in the] cities of Lycaonia, and the neighboring region."

Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium after running away from Antioch. Their experience at Antioch did not stop them from preaching the Word in Iconium. A Christian should use the fires of opposition as an ignition to light up stronger fire that would light up and heat up the body of Christ (church). Opposition should be used as fuel and grease to move a stagnated vehicle or to make that vehicle move faster.

When they spoke in Iconium, a great multitude of the Jews and the Greeks believed (Acts 14:1). However, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. Despite that opposition, they continued preaching in that city boldly (Acts 14:3). This caused a division among those who believed in the word they preached and those who did not (Acts 14:4).

As a result, Paul and Barnabas faced great opposition. It is tough to be fought by an unbeliever. It is tough to be fought by a believer. It is tougher to be fought by both of them. The Jews and Gentiles together with their leaders attempted to stone Paul and Barnabas in Iconium. When Paul and Barnabas saw that, they escaped to Lystra and Derbe, and took refuge in the cities of Lycaonia and the neighboring region. The world never lacks places to take refuge in. However, when taking refuge when faced with opposition, avoid taking refuge in isolation. Satan can use that isolation to finish you. Take refuge where there are other people and use that opportunity to spread the gospel to them.

Arrest in Philippi

Acts 16:16-40 (AMP) – "[16] It happened that as we were on our way to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination [that is, a demonic spirit claiming to foretell the

future and discover hidden knowledge], and she brought her owners a good profit by fortune-telling. [17] She followed after Paul and us and kept screaming and shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming to you the way of salvation!” [18] She continued doing this for several days. Then Paul, being greatly annoyed and worn out, turned and said to the spirit [inside her], “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ [as His representative] to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment. [19] But when her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the market place [where trials were held], [20] and when they had brought them before the chief magistrates, they said, “These men, who are Jews, are throwing our city into confusion and causing trouble. [21] They are publicly teaching customs which are unlawful for us, as Romans, to accept or observe.” [22] The crowd also joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten with rods. [23] After striking them many times [with the rods], they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely. [24] He, having received such a [strict] command, threw them into the inner prison (dungeon) and fastened their feet in the stocks [in an agonizing position]. [25] But about midnight when Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; [26] suddenly there was a great earthquake, so [powerful] that the very foundations of the prison were shaken and at once all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened. [27] When the jailer, shaken out of sleep, saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. [28] But Paul shouted, saying, “Do not hurt yourself, we are all here!” [29] Then the jailer called for torches and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, [30] and after he brought them out [of the inner prison], he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” [31] And they answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus [as your personal Savior and entrust yourself to Him] and you will be saved, you and your household [if they also believe].” [32] And they spoke the word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ] to him and to all who were in his house. [33] And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their bloody wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. [34] Then he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, since he had believed in God with his entire family [accepting with joy what had been made known to them about the Christ]. [35] Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their officers, saying, “Release those men.” [36] And the jailer repeated the words to Paul, saying,

"The chief magistrates have sent word to release you; so come out now and go in peace." [37] But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without a trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now they are sending us out secretly? No! Let them come here themselves and bring us out!" [38] The officers reported this message to the chief magistrates, and when they heard that the prisoners were Romans, they were frightened; [39] so they came [to the prison] and appealed to them [with apologies], and when they brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. [40] So they left the prison and went to Lydia's house; and when they had seen the brothers and sisters, they encouraged and comforted them, and left."

Paul and Silas met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination when they were on their way to the place of prayer (Acts 16:16). The girl followed the two men of God, shouting that they were servants of the Most High God (Acts 16:17). She did that for several days (Acts 16:18).

Paul became greatly annoyed and worn out because of that. Thus, he commanded the spirit to get out of her (Acts 16:18). Her Roman owners were angry that their hope for profit was gone. Therefore, they seized Paul and Silas and took them to the chief magistrates. They accused them of causing confusion and trouble and teaching customs that were unlawful to them as Romans (Acts 16:19-21).

The chief magistrates tore their robes and ordered that they should be beaten with rods, and the crowd also joined in the attacks against them (Acts 16:22). When they were thrown in prison, they prayed and sang hymns of praise to God. Suddenly there was a great earthquake which was so powerful that the very foundations of the prison were shaken and at once all the doors were opened and everyone's chain was unfastened (Acts 16:26). That act literally showed how the power of God sets the captives free.

The foundations of the prisons were shaken. It is easy to shake a building but it is not easy to shake the foundation of that building. The power of God shook the foundations of the Roman prisons. No foundation of the enemy can stand. That is why those who have chosen not to allow God to build their houses (involve God in everything) are doing it in vain (Psalm 127:1-2).

The jailer was afraid that he would lose his life because all the prisoners had escaped. Paul comforted the prison warden and told him not to be afraid. What is interesting in this story is that Paul and Silas did not rush to get out of prison like the other prisoners. Instead, they remained to

minister to the jailer. God's work was more important for them than getting out of prison. They esteemed God's mission to be highly beneficial than leaving the affliction that they were going through at the moment.

When the jailer asked what he would do to be saved, they told him to believe in the Lord Jesus and he would be saved (Acts 16:31). Paul and Silas went the extra mile to preach the Word of God in the jailer's home (Acts 16:32). The jailer showed compassion to them. He took them, washed their bloody wounds, and got baptized together with his entire household (Acts 16:33-34). He then took them to his house, gave them food and rejoiced greatly because they had accepted and believed in Jesus.

In Acts 16:37, the chief magistrate ordered the release of Paul and Silas. After being beaten and imprisoned without a trial, Paul, and Silas, who were Roman citizens, protested their treatment when the authorities tried to release them quietly. Paul demanded that the magistrates, who had violated their rights, come and personally escort them out of prison. The magistrates, frightened upon realizing their mistake, came and apologized, then escorted Paul and Silas out while pleading with them to leave the city. After their release, Paul and Silas visited Lydia's house, where they encouraged the believers before departing from Philippi.

By insisting on a public acknowledgment of their wrongful treatment, Paul and Silas showed faith that God would protect them and bring justice, despite the risk of further repercussions. They showed courage in adversity by trusting that God was in control of their situation, allowing them to act boldly and assert their rights as Roman citizens. Paul and Silas's refusal to leave secretly highlighted their commitment to transparency and integrity. They demonstrated faith that God honors those who act justly and truthfully.

By making the authorities publicly acknowledge their wrongdoing, they were not only standing up for their own rights but also bearing witness to the truth and justice of God's kingdom. Their actions would have been a powerful example to the new believers in Philippi, showing that faith in God empowers one to stand up against injustice. After being released, they immediately went to encourage and comfort the believers, demonstrating faith that their suffering had a purpose in strengthening the church community.

Throughout their ordeal, Paul and Silas maintained their faith that God was sovereign over the situation. This is seen in their singing hymns and praying while in prison, even before the earthquake occurred. Their release and the public apology from the authorities served a greater purpose in protecting the fledgling church in Philippi and ensuring its continued growth without fear of unjust persecution.

Accusations Before Gallio

Acts 18:12-17 (AMP) – "[12] But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (southern Greece), the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, [13] declaring, "This man is persuading people to worship God in violation of the law [of Moses]." [14] But when Paul was about to reply, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of some misdemeanor or serious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to put up with you; [15] but since it is merely a question [of doctrine within your religion] about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I am unwilling to judge these matters." [16] And he drove them away from the judgment seat. [17] Then the Greeks all seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him right in front of the judgment seat; but Gallio paid no attention to any of this."

In Acts 18:12-17, while Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia, the Jews brought Paul before him, accusing him of persuading people to worship God contrary to the Jewish law. Before Paul could defend himself, Gallio dismissed the case, stating it was an internal matter of Jewish law and not a crime under Roman law. Gallio then drove the accusers away from the judgment seat. Subsequently, the Greeks seized Sosthenes, the synagogue leader, and beat him in front of Gallio, who ignored the incident.

Gallio's dismissal of the case set a precedent that disputes over Jewish religious law were not under Roman jurisdiction, providing some protection for early Christian preaching. The incident highlights the tension between the Jewish community and the growing Christian movement, as well as the general disorder in the region.

By refusing to judge the case, Gallio inadvertently protected Paul, allowing him to continue his mission without Roman interference. This time round, Paul escaped punishment because what he

had done was not a crime under Roman law and Gallio was not well conversant with Jewish law and was not interested in it either.

Imprisonment in Rome

Acts 28:16-31 (AMP) – "[16] When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself [in rented quarters] with the soldier who was guarding him. [17] Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Kinsmen, though I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our fathers, yet I was turned over as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. [18] After they had interrogated me, they were ready to release me because I was not guilty of any offense deserving death. [19] But when the Jews objected [to my release], I was forced to appeal to Caesar (Emperor Nero), not because I had any charge to make against my nation. [20] For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel (the Messiah, the resurrection) that I am bound with this chain." [21] They said to him, "We have not received [any] letters about you from Judea, nor have any of the [Jewish] brothers come here and reported or said anything bad about you. [22] But we would like to hear from you what your views are [that is, exactly what you believe]; for in regard to this sect (Christianity), we are fully aware that it is denounced everywhere." [23] When they had set a day for Paul, they came to his lodging in large numbers. And he carefully explained [Christianity] to them from morning until evening, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, both from the Law of Moses and from the [writings of the] Prophets. [24] Some were persuaded by what he said, but others would not believe. [25] They disagreed among themselves and they *began* to leave after Paul had made one *last* statement: "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, [26] 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand, You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; [27] "For the heart (the understanding, the soul) of this people has become dull (calloused), And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have shut their eyes [to the truth]; Otherwise they might see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return [to Me], And I would heal them."' [28] Therefore let it be known to you that [this message of] the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they indeed will listen!" [29] [And when he had said these things, the Jews left, arguing among themselves.] [30] And Paul lived there for two full years

[at his own expense] in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him, [31] preaching *and* proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness *and* boldness, unhindered *and* unrestrained."

This is the history of events prior to Paul's house arrest in Rome:

Acts 21:27-36 - Paul is arrested in Jerusalem:

- **Acts 21:27-30**: Paul is seized by a mob in the temple in Jerusalem.
- **Acts 21:31-33**: The Roman commander intervenes and arrests Paul to prevent a riot.
- **Acts 21:34-36**: Paul is taken into custody by the Romans.

Acts 23:11-35 - Paul is transferred to Caesarea:

- **Acts 23:11**: The Lord assures Paul that he will testify in Rome.
- **Acts 23:12-22**: A plot to kill Paul is discovered.
- **Acts 23:23-35**: Paul is sent to Caesarea under heavy guard to stand trial before Governor Felix.

Acts 25:1-12 - Paul's appeal to Caesar:

- **Acts 25:6-12**: Paul, realizing that he is not getting a fair trial and to avoid being handed over to the Jews, appeals to Caesar, which is his right as a Roman citizen.

Acts 27:1-28:16 - Paul's journey to Rome:

- **Acts 27**: Paul's journey by sea, including the shipwreck.
- **Acts 28:1-16**: Paul's arrival in Rome.

When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he called the leaders of the Jews and told them what he was doing was for the hope of Israel. They told him that they would like to hear his views on his beliefs because at that time Christianity was denounced everywhere. When they had set a day for Paul, they went to his lodging in large numbers. Paul carefully explained Christianity to them from morning until evening, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, both from the Law of Moses and from the writings of the Prophets (Acts 28:33). Some believed but others did not.

They began to leave when Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah 6:9-10 (KJV) says, "[9] And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. [10] Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Paul used this quotation to address the Jewish leaders in Rome, emphasizing their spiritual insensitivity and their refusal to accept the message of salvation. By citing Isaiah, Paul highlighted the continuity of this theme from the Old Testament to his own time, pointing out that the rejection of God's message by the Jews would lead to its acceptance by the Gentiles.

The message that Paul was preaching to them seemed unbearable to them. So they left, leaving Paul under house arrest for two more years. Truth may sound unbearable but running away from it will not make it sound bearable. Running away from truth because it is unbearable will only make it more unbearable because when one runs away from it, he is creating conflict against it and when you go against the truth, life will be unbearable for you. Truth is bearable because God does not want to pull us away from Him. He wants us to pull closer to Him. The more you align yourself with truth, the more bearable your life will be.

When Paul abode at that place for two more years, he welcomed whoever visited him. To them he preached and proclaimed the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. Normally, when we visit people in prison, we go there to give because they are in a vulnerable position as they cannot provide certain things for themselves since they lack the freedom to work and buy things. However, Paul was different. When people visited him in prison, he was the one who gave. What he gave them was immeasurable and it was what they needed most whether they knew it or not. Joseph used his gift of dream interpretation to serve various people in prison. A child of God always has something to give.

2 Timothy 1:16-17 (KJV) - "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me."

Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul when he was imprisoned. Many Christians shun people who are widely known to be sinners. Some would want to interact with them but in secret when no one

is watching so that they do not get a bad name among their peers. Sin brings shame and it can lead one to isolation as a result of that shame.

Sinners need Jesus Christ to take them out of that shame. Jesus Christ is not physically on earth with us but He uses human agents to take sinners out of that shame. When we shun away from sinners or feel ashamed to associate with them, we deny them and ourselves the blessedness of being part of the body of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:8 (KJV) - "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

Paul was imprisoned many times but in 2 Timothy 1:8, he did not acknowledge the prisons that had imprisoned him. He did not say that he was a prisoner of Rome or Caesarea. Instead, he said that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. When you are a prisoner of Jesus Christ you are free. Paul could not stop the authorities from arresting and imprisoning him. However, he did not stop spreading God’s Word regardless of his situation. Being a prisoner in Christ is the best imprisonment. Being addicted to Christ is the best addiction. You need to allow Christ to have total control of you all the time.

Establishing Churches and Discipling Believers

Acts 14:21-22 (KJV) - "[21] And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, [22] Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Paul traveled extensively, establishing churches, and discipling believers, demonstrating his unwavering faith in spreading the Gospel. In Acts 14:21-22, he was with Barnabas. They had faced

opposition in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Persecution has accompanied the opposition they faced. Barnabas and Paul were driven forcefully out of Antioch (Acts 13:50). Together, they encountered an attempt to get mistreated and stoned in Iconium (Acts 14:5-6). This caused them to escape to Lystra. Paul was stoned, and together with Barnabas they were chased from Lystra (Acts 14:19-20).

The Bible records that they went back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Lystra was the last point where they had encountered persecution but the Bible records it first in the list when mentioning the places that Paul and Barnabas returned to. Immediately after talking about their persecution in Acts 13:50 – Acts 14:20, the Bible talks about their return in the subsequent verses.

It is human nature to dread the places that one has encountered pain. Picture a place where you met thieves, or bullies or just had a terrible experience. The last thing on your mind is to go back to that place. You try to avoid that place at all costs. If you have something important and urgent that needs you to go back there you can even cancel it. The Bible says that love does not seek its own (1 Corinthians 13:5). The Bible also says that loves bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Christ-like love was shown when Paul and Barnabas went back to the exact same places that caused them pain. They did not wait to heal first. They had run from Lystra to Derbe. They preached the gospel in Derbe city and taught many then returned back to Lystra. It is like they received healing from God through the preaching and teaching they did in Derbe. Earnest service to God that is in accordance with God's Word can do better than all earthly physicians and psychiatrists.

Some people are still hurting and cannot go back to church because of something they encountered thirty years ago. Paul's love for God and for his brethren made him go back to them despite the terrible situations that he had encountered. When you want to give up on God, ask yourself, how much do you love God? When you want to give up on other people, ask yourself, how much do you love them? Paul delighted in ministry. Paul delighted in making more disciples for Christ.

Paul discipled many individuals throughout his ministry. Here are some of the people he discipled:

Timothy

Acts 16:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: [2] Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. [3] Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."

1 Timothy 1:2 (KJV) - "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

Titus

Titus 1:4 (KJV) - "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Onesimus

Philemon 1:10 (KJV) - "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds."

Silas (Silvanus)

Acts 15:40 (KJV) - "And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

2 Corinthians 1:19 (KJV) - "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea."

Luke

Colossians 4:14 (KJV) - "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."

2 Timothy 4:11 (KJV) - "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

Priscilla and Aquila

Acts 18:1-3 (KJV) - "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

Romans 16:3 (KJV) - "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus."

Immediately after you are baptized, Christ gives you a commission. The commission is to go out there and make more disciples for Him (Matthew 28:19-20). Build as many churches as possible and make as many disciples as possible. If you are a teacher in church one highly profitable work you can do for your students is to make them to be teachers as well. They may not have the gift of speaking but they can use their various gifts to teach people about God. The best way to teach them is through your life example. Go to extents that are beyond your comfort zone.

When God calls you to go to a place, do not fear going there because you are not familiar with that place. Do not be afraid because you have a shortage in finances. Do not be afraid because of terrible things that you have heard concerning that place. Go there and make more disciples. Do not leave church because of human beings, they are not the ones who died on the cross for you.

Build as many churches as possible. If you have a huge piece of land, dedicate a small portion of it for the church. In residential estates built by Muslims, it is a common thing to see them building mosques in those estates. Christian real estate developers should duplicate this model and build a church in every residential estate they build. If it is a commercial building, one can set a special room for a church. If you are building a private home, have a special prayer room in that house. Build a church before you build your house. Put God first, literally.

Embracing Many Things for the Gospel

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (KJ21) - “[19] For though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. [20] And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might

win the Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; [21] to those who are outside the law, as outside the law (being not outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ), that I might win those who are outside the law. [22] To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. [23] And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Paul became many things so that he could win people for Christ. To those who are weak, he became weak. In humility, even though Christ had given him freedom, he made himself servant to all men. To the Jews he became a Jew. To those who are under the law, he acted as if he was under the law so that he would win those who were under the law.

A good number of 'Devoted' Christians love segregating themselves from 'sinners.' Sometimes it is out of good intention since they do not want to engage themselves with people who will negatively influence them. People who consider themselves sinners avoid interacting with those who are seen as holy because sometimes they feel that they are way below them. These two groups of believers and unbelievers have ways that are so parallel to each other that makes them not to freely associate with each other.

Both groups are unwilling to accommodate one another. Humility is not natural to unbelievers. However, humility should be natural to believers. One evening Pastor Morris Ndolo came to church dressed in a very elegant suit. Earlier on during the day I had seen him in church dressed casually. Being one of those very few men who notice details, I complimented him then went ahead to ask him what caused the change of style. He told me that he had dressed casually in the morning because he was ministering to children, and he wanted to be at their level. However, he wore that suit in the evening because he was ministering to adults.

You can be eloquent and have articulate words and what you are saying might be the entire truth. However, the message you are spreading will be of no value if those you are ministering to do not understand you or relate to you. The best way for people to relate with you is by being humble and coming down to their level.

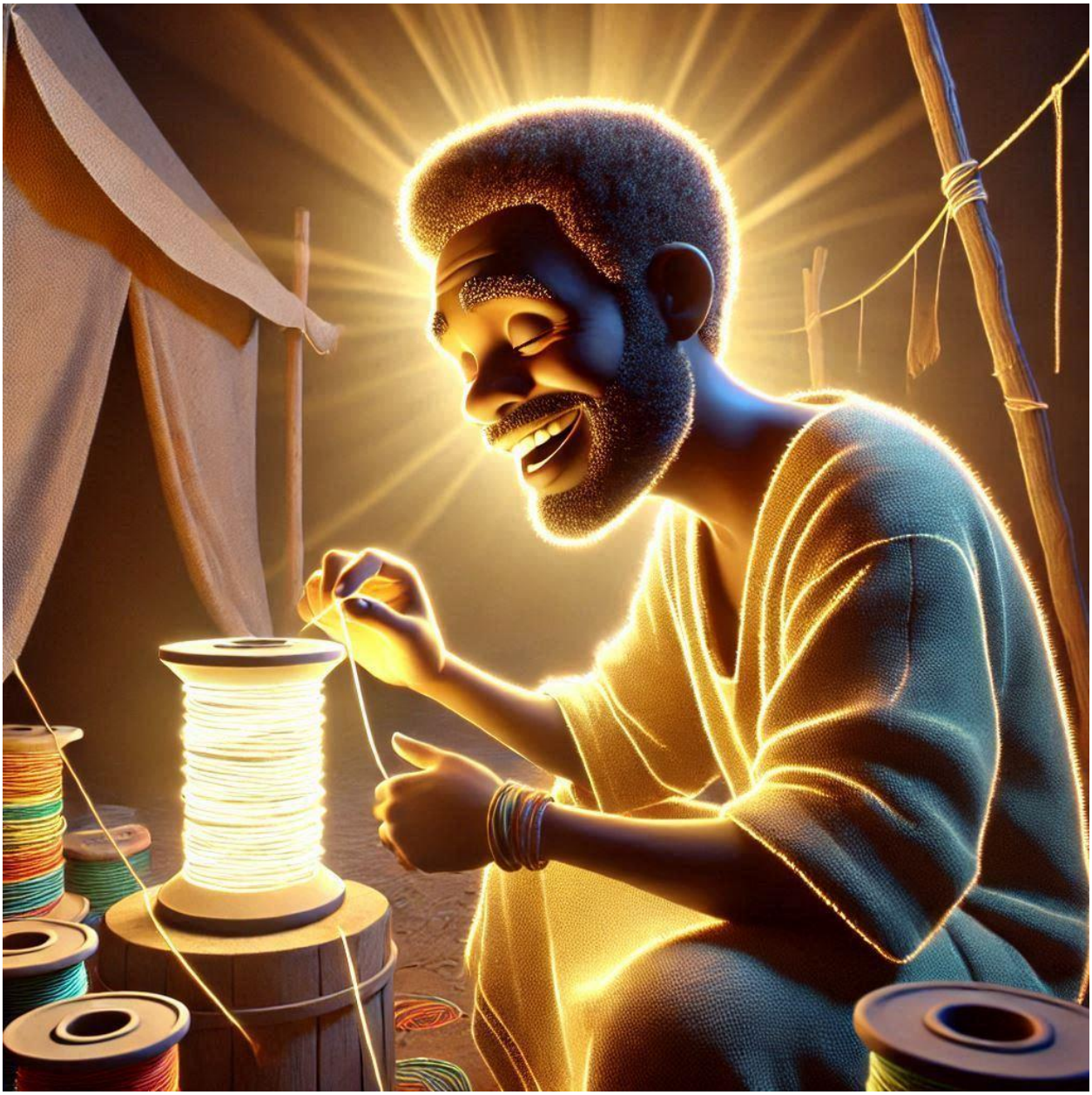
Pastor Stephen Rundo told me that together with Pastor Kigundu Ndwiga, they used to do car racing, mostly on Sunday so that they could win certain people to Christ. They found out what

those people were interested in and used that to lead them to salvation. True to their ambition, they won them.

Pastor Stephen Rundo does many wonderful things. He tries to follow up on basketball, football among other sports so that he can have something to talk about with someone whom he is targeting to lead to salvation. It is a highly effective strategy when one starts ministering to someone from a lower level, slowly bringing them to a higher level.

The person who believes in God but is not so strong in the faith can use such strategies. They can find people who are at their level and grow with them slowly. Such will result in Christians who are united with a bond that is tighter than a drumline's rhythm, more unbreakable than a superhero's shield, and as epic as a cosmic dance-off under the stars.

Paul the Tentmaker



2 Thessalonians 3:8 (AMP) - “Nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we worked night and day [to pay our own way] so that we would not be a financial burden on any of you [for our support].”

Paul worked day and night so that he would not be a financial burden to people. Serving God does not only mean preaching at the pulpit and teaching. You can do various other things to serve God. Sometimes, I hear modern pastors being criticized for opening businesses. People have the wrong

perception of the gospel when they say that an ordained person of God should be only involved in preaching the gospel at the pulpit and doing pastoral duties.

This perception has caused many genuine spiritual people to live in limitation. They can barely cater for their needs. Therefore, they become a burden to people. Many of them bring shame to the gospel because how can you preach that God is the provider while He has not provided for you? If you introspect their lives, you will realize that God gave them many opportunities to make more than enough money to be more than comfortable, but they threw them under the table because they falsely believe that money making activities are for the Devil and his people.

This ideology causes Satan's people to take over in every area in the world and it causes Christians to be under subjection to the power and control of the enemy. Satan has ruled in his sphere, and he wants to rule in the Church by advocating for a doctrine of limitation. He has been quite successful in his endeavors. For example, when I went to preach in Karura Seventh Day Adventist School, one student asked me in the afternoon Bible study session (I'm paraphrasing), "You tell us to only listen to gospel music, but gospel music is usually low quality, it is not grammy level." I did not understand what he meant at that time but now I understand.

Sometimes one may want to listen to gospel songs, but their choice is limited, as there are not very many gospel songs distributed out there compared to secular. I analyzed and I realized that there are very many super talented gospel musicians particularly in my denomination (The Seventh Day Adventist denomination) who are doing a really good job in sitting on their talents. They limit the reach of their music to churches of the same denomination within their countries or regions alone. If you ask them, they will tell you that they are doing it for God and they are not doing it for money or fame.

Many will tell you that they are comfortable with what they are doing, and they do not want to become so big. Such behavior may look noble, but it has caused more harm than we can collectively imagine. God has called us to minister to all nations (Matthew 28:19), and to reach to the uttermost parts of the earth. The people of the world have done that in their endeavors, that is why evil is dominating.

We are the ones supposed to dominate, but we have allowed ourselves to be dominated (Genesis 1:28). I have seen this behavior with very many highly and multitalented Christians. We have great

Christian poets that are not known, great Christian preachers that are scarcely known. Some of them do not need to do much, they just need to open a YouTube Channel and get into other social media channels and work hard to distribute their content.

Doing that will lead more people to God. It will also help them to gain more money and if they do not want that money, they can give it to the church. If they do that, the church will grow exponentially, and Christ's message will be more widespread than it is now. However, we have misunderstood the gospel because we have been taught by teachers who have misunderstood it, who were also taught by teachers that did not properly understand it.

The same people who are saying that they are not doing it for money are working extremely hard at their employment jobs and have less time to spend with God. They are always praying to God to give them a promotion or to increase their salaries so that their lives can be better. If they were truly not looking for money, they should leave their jobs and serve God full time. Paul worked hard so that he could have adequate finances for himself and for other people. He did not want to be a financial burden to others.

What job did Paul do?

Acts 18:1-3 (AMP) - "[1] After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. [2] There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla, because [the Roman Emperor] Claudius had issued an edict that all the Jews were to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, [3] and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them; and they worked together for they were tent-makers."

Paul was a tent maker, and he associated with fellow tent makers such as Aquila and Priscilla. He also associated himself with apostles like him. In other words, he associated himself with other people who were involved in the spheres he was involved in.

It is important to associate yourself with people in your industry. It will give you more knowledge of the industry. If you are multitalented, associate yourself with various people from the various talents that you have. God wants you to socialize with as many people as possible. One easy way to build your social capital is by associating with people whom you have the same interests and talents as you are in. It is easy because you have a common ground on the topics to talk about.

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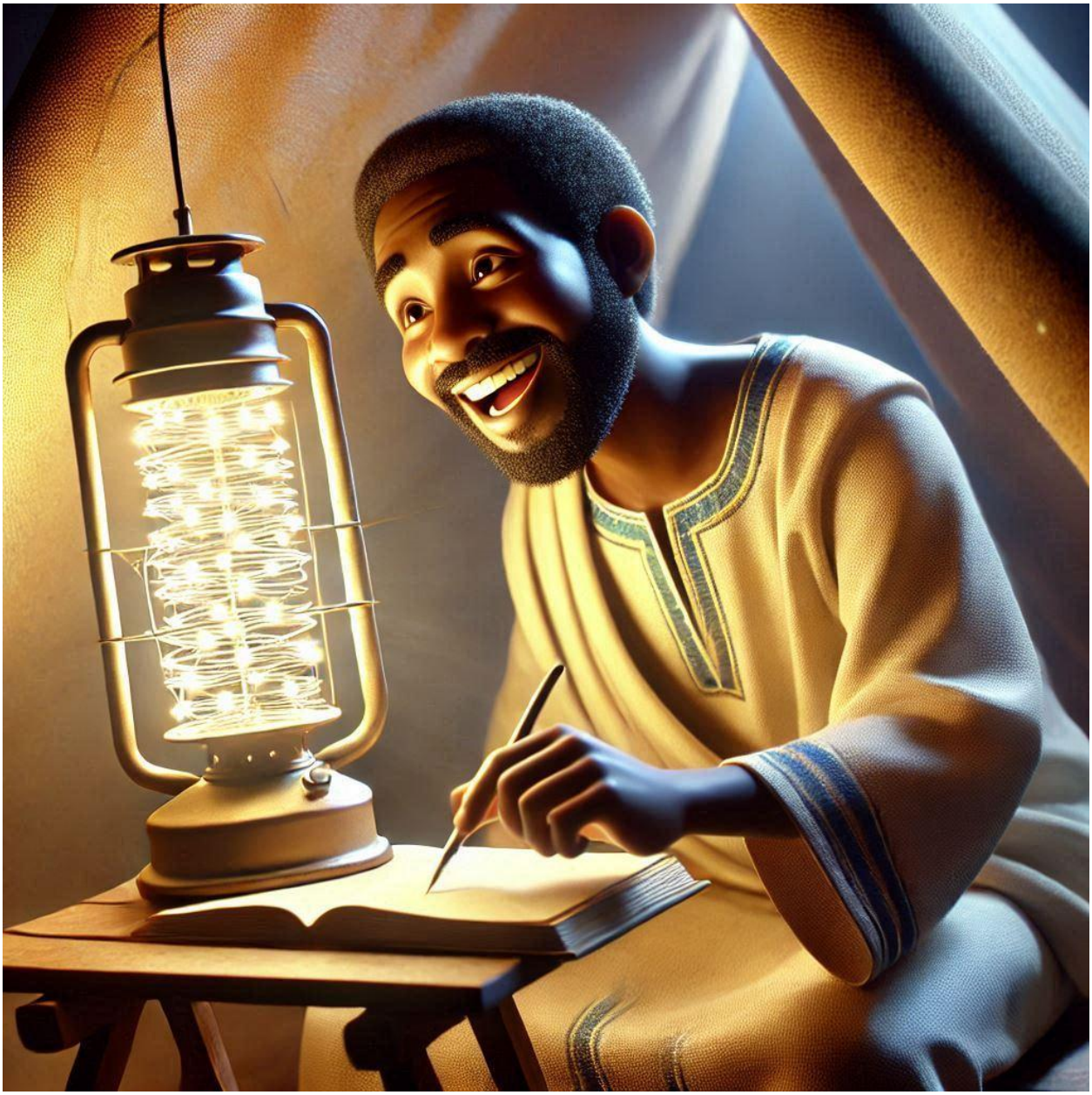
Writing Epistles of Encouragement and Instruction



Romans 1:11-12 (KJV) - “[11] For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; [12] That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

Paul wrote numerous epistles to encourage, instruct, and edify believers, reflecting his deep faith and understanding of Christian doctrine. A Christian should never run short of encouragement or

instruction whether you are experienced in a matter or not. Christians often shy away from giving people encouragement and instructions on things that they are not experienced in. On your own, you do not have experience on everything. Therefore, your knowledge may be scarce in that particular area.

The good news is that when you align yourself with God, you align yourself with the one who has experience in everything. He imparts His vast experience to your little experience. As a result, you are fully experienced just like Him. This means that you are fully equipped to give advice in anything. The secret is when someone shares with you a problem that you have not yet encountered, pray before you solve that problem.

Joseph gave interpretations of dreams to dreams that he had never dreamt. Daniel did the same thing. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt without prior experience in doing that. Paul gave people solid and profound instructions on marriage and he was not married. Some people tell me that I do not appear to be very smart. Some say I look naïve. It is good to be underrated than overrated because being underrated gives you room to exceed expectations.

One day when coming from choir practice, someone told me, "I read your devotional articles, and when I read them, I ask myself, is this really Alex?" What he meant is that he finds the writings so profound. He was right. It is not me; it is God.

Philippians 4:13 (KJV) – "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you because God is the one doing what He has told you to do. Ellen G. White says, "His biddings are enablings." Pastor Randy Skeete said that the power to obey the command is in the command.

On your own, you cannot do anything (John 15:5, Acts 17:28). With Christ, you can do all things because He is above all things (Colossians 1:16-17; Psalm 113:4-6). It is like being in kindergarten and having an earthly parent who has a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in mathematics. On your own, you struggle with your math assignment (finding the answer to questions like 1+1 and 2+2).

If you do that assignment on your own without help, you might end up getting some questions wrong or everything wrong. However, when your parent does it for you, you will get everything right. God has more mathematical knowledge than all mathematical professors combined, past,

present, and future. He has exceedingly (understatement) great knowledge, wisdom, and understanding in everything. As a result, He is able to do for you, what you cannot do for yourself. That is why the phrase, “God helps those who help themselves” is erroneous because God helps those who cannot help themselves.

Praying for the Churches and Fellow Believers

Ephesians 1:15-16 (KJV) - "[15] Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, [16] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

Paul fervently prayed for the churches and fellow believers, demonstrating his reliance on God and concern for their spiritual well-being. How often do you pray for others? How often do you pray for your country? How often do you pray for your church? How often do you mention others in prayer, including those who have hurt you the most? Pray for others. Job’s captivity was turned away when he prayed for his friends (Job 42:10). Sometimes God does not answer our prayers because of how selfish they sound. Practice selflessness even in your prayers.

Maintaining Joy and Gratitude in All Circumstances

Philippians 4:11-13 (KJV) - "[11] Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. [12] I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. [13] I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Through these actions and teachings, Paul exemplified profound faith in Jesus Christ, demonstrating unwavering commitment, perseverance, and reliance on God's grace and power. He

learned that in whatever state he is in to be content. Being content does not mean to be mediocre. It does not mean to set low goals. It does not mean to have a low ambition and it does not mean to do the bare minimum.

The Greek word used for content in Philippians 4:11 is autarkēs. The full meaning of this word implies a sense of inner peace and satisfaction, a condition where one is not dependent on external factors for happiness or fulfillment. When Paul says that he has learnt how to be content in all situations it means that he has learnt how to be happy and satisfied in all circumstances. We need to be grateful to God in all situations. Paul says in Philippians 4:4 (KJV), “Rejoice in the Lord, always.” There is no right time to rejoice in God, we should rejoice in God all the time.

Happiness and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are planted inside us by God. That means one cannot find happiness and peace by external factors. Human beings chase people and material possessions hoping to get happiness from them. Once they get them, they get excited but it does not take long before that excitement ends.

Sometimes, they chase someone or something too much, only to realize that they have spent so much time chasing the wrong person or the wrong thing. You should be happy and satisfied even when you have not yet achieved your goal. That is what Paul means by being content. When you are happy when doing your duties, you will be more productive than one who is working when stressed and angry.

Paul has been in situations of abundance (to abound) and lack (to be abased). Therefore, when he is giving us this advice, he is talking from experience. He goes on to say that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him (Philippians 4:13). When you are with God, you have the ability to do all things regardless of the situation you are facing.

Suffering Joyfully for Christ's Sake

2 Corinthians 12:10 (KJV) - "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Paul did not say he enjoys suffering. He said he enjoys suffering for Christ’s sake. Many of us suffer because of our own sinful choices. When you suffer as a result of a sin you have committed, you should take that opportunity to reflect and to seek God to make you a better person. Suffering

as a consequence of a sin you have done is brought to you so that you hate sin and change your ways.

Most suffering is brought by sin but sometimes one can suffer as a result of something righteous that they have done. The reason for such suffering is because we live in a sinful world with sinners surrounding us. As you are doing right, one may afflict you because they do not like what you are doing. God in His love watches over such affliction and blesses you more if you manage to overcome than He would if you had not gone through that suffering.

Encountering affliction as a result of being righteous is a blessing in disguise. Paul knew this and that is why he rejoiced when he faced adversity for Christ's sake. He sees it as an opportunity to strengthen him, not to weaken him.

When you are doing body exercises, the experience is not always pleasurable because you are subjected to carry out strenuous exercises that stretch your muscles and make you feel weak and tired. The next week or the next day, when you try the same exercises, you realize that they have become easier. For example, if you were lifting 2.5 kilograms of weight, you realize that you have gained more strength to lift five kilograms of weight. Those exercises which make you feel weak have resulted in making you stronger.

Paul delights in affliction because the affliction that has made him feel weak has caused him to be stronger. It has given him the strength to face tougher circumstances which have made him spiritually, mentally, and emotionally stronger. As a result, he is able to be more productive. He is able to serve God with more agility and power.

Modeling Christ like Love and Humility

Philippians 2:3-4 (KJV) - "[3] Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. [4] Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Christ-like love is perfect love. It is a love that considers others and esteems others better than themselves. Christ-like love is sacrificial. As Christians we are followers of Christ, so we need to do things as He did. We need to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). Everything

we carry out should be for the benefit of others. If you live like that, God will superabundantly bless you. However, if you choose to live in selfishness, you will barely progress from where you are.

Philippians 2:8-11 (KJV) - "[8] And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. [9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; [11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christ portrayed humility even in the most humiliating death, the death of the cross. As a result, He was highly exalted and given a name which is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Love and humility are ingredients to positive progress. Have perfect love and perfect humility just as God has.

Demonstrating Forgiveness and Restoration

Colossians 3:13 (KJV) - "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Paul preached forgiveness and forbearance because he also forgave and was long suffering to others. Paul did not pay evil for evil. He paid evil for good. When someone hears Jesus Christ’s words about loving one’s enemy, someone would say that it was easy for Jesus to do so because Jesus is God. That is why people show little interest in modeling the character of the Great Immanuel. Christ preached that we ought to love our enemies and pray for them.

Paul modeled that by loving his enemies and forgiving them. God forgives all sins. A child of God made in the image of God, who listens to the Word of God, with the power of God working in him will be able to forgive all wrongs done to him. Unforgiveness harms the soul. Forgiveness cures the soul. Unforgiveness blocks the channel of blessings to you. Forgiveness unblocks the channel of blessings to you. Some illnesses that people get are a result of refusing to forgive others. Forgiveness benefits you as well as the person who has wronged you.

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Remaining Steadfast in Faith Amidst Trials

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV) - "[7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Paul remained steadfast in his faith amidst trials and tribulations, trusting in God's faithfulness and the hope of eternal glory. Being a prisoner of the Lord Jesus gave Paul the freedom to do all good things and be a blessing to his fellow men even when facing the worst circumstances.

The fight that Paul fought for the cause of God was good because he repaid good for the evil that was done to him. When you exchange evil for evil, you are engaging in an evil fight but when you exchange good for good and good for evil, you are engaging in a good fight. When you fight the good fight, finish your course, and keep the faith, God has laid up for you a crown of righteousness because He is the righteous judge.

Encouraging Believers to Stand Firm in the Faith

Ephesians 6:13 (KJV) - "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Paul encouraged believers to stand firm in the faith, equipping them with spiritual armor and exhorting them to persevere in spiritual warfare. My friend, Pastor Stephen Rundo told me (I’m paraphrasing), “It does not matter what you do, as long as you keep standing.” God wants you to keep standing. When you fall, you take back the whole armor of God and stand back on your feet again. No guilt should stop you. No discouragement should stop you. No backbiting should stop you. No backstabbing should stop you. No insults should stop you. No assault should stop you. No chains should stop you. Keep standing. Stand firm in the Lord your God.

Commitment to Preaching the Whole Counsel of God

Acts 20:27 (KJV) - "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Preachers should preach the whole truth. They should not be selective in their messages by choosing what to preach and what not to. While the gospel is meant to make one prosperous, some preachers only preach prosperity and they do not preach about sin. Some preachers only preach about the last day events and they preach nothing else. Some only preach on the topic of grace. Paul preached the whole counsel of God. Christ preached everything as well. As followers of Christ, we should preach the whole Bible and not just the parts we like. God is one whole being. We should represent Him exactly as He is and not just some parts.

Exhorting Believers to Grow in Faith and Love

Ephesians 4:1-3 (KJV) - "[1] I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, [2] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; [3] Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Paul exhorted believers to grow in faith and love, encouraging them to walk worthy of their calling and to pursue spiritual maturity. He strongly encouraged them to walk with humility because the pride of this world needs to be countered with humility, not with pride, as many attempt to do. He encouraged them to be patient with others. God is patient with us even though we are highly impatient with others. We sin and go back to Him to ask for forgiveness for the same sin and He still forgives us because He is patient.

Faith in God is shown in patience. Love is also shown in patience (1 Corinthians 13:4). Paul exhorted believers to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Unity is best cultivated when we have a genuine interest in our hearts of benefitting the other person. This pulls the heart of the other person close to ours and as hearts are knitted for the cause of God, God receives the glory.

Rejoicing in the Salvation of Others

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (KJV) - "[19] For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? [20] For ye are our glory and joy."

1 Thessalonians 5:8-10 (KJV) - "[8] But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. [9] For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

Paul rejoiced in the salvation of others, celebrating the work of God in transforming lives and bringing people into the kingdom. He calls others his glory and joy (1 Thessalonians 2:20). The most precious possession that God has is us. Therefore, we who are followers of Jesus Christ, ought to have other people as our most precious possession. This includes those who view and treat us like trash. Our righteous conduct towards them will do a great work in washing the hard long-lived stains in their hearts.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 says that God has not appointed us to wrath. God has not appointed us to pain. God has not appointed us to punishments. God seeks to redeem us. Jesus wants us to get the salvation that He freely gives us. God gets sad when He has to punish people because that is not His nature. He will be glad when we all go to heaven. Therefore, we should all be glad when more brothers and sisters make it to heaven.

Submitting to God's Will and Guidance

Acts 21:14 (KJV) - "And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

Acts 16:6-10 (KJ21) – "[6] Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, [7] after they had come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not. [8] And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. [9] And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." [10] And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel unto them.

Paul exhibited submission to God's will and direction, seeking His guidance and obeying His leading in his ministry endeavors."

Sharing the Gospel with Boldness

Romans 1:16 (KJV) - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Paul boldly shared the Gospel with others, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and His redeeming work. We are usually ashamed of that which is bad. We should not be ashamed of the good news because the good news is good. Good News (Gospel) means the news of success, the news of prosperity in all areas of life, the news of restoration, the news of redemption, the news that leads to greatness among other good, noble, and righteous attributes.

How can we be ashamed of something as good and distinguished as that? Those who are ashamed of the gospel, are ashamed of it because they do not know it well. Some assume that they know it but they do not know it. Normally, we tie the gospel to those who preach it. Therefore, if you used to hate the Christian leader in your school or you used to think lowly of him, you are inclined to hate the gospel or think lowly of it. If you don't like how a certain pastor dresses, you use his image to dress the gospel.

The gospel is what it is and not what we perceive it to be. Study the Word of God for yourself and allow the Holy Spirit to teach you. If you do so, you will not be ashamed of it. It will be the first thing in your casual conversations. You shall find it difficult to have a conversation with someone without mentioning God or a Bible verse.

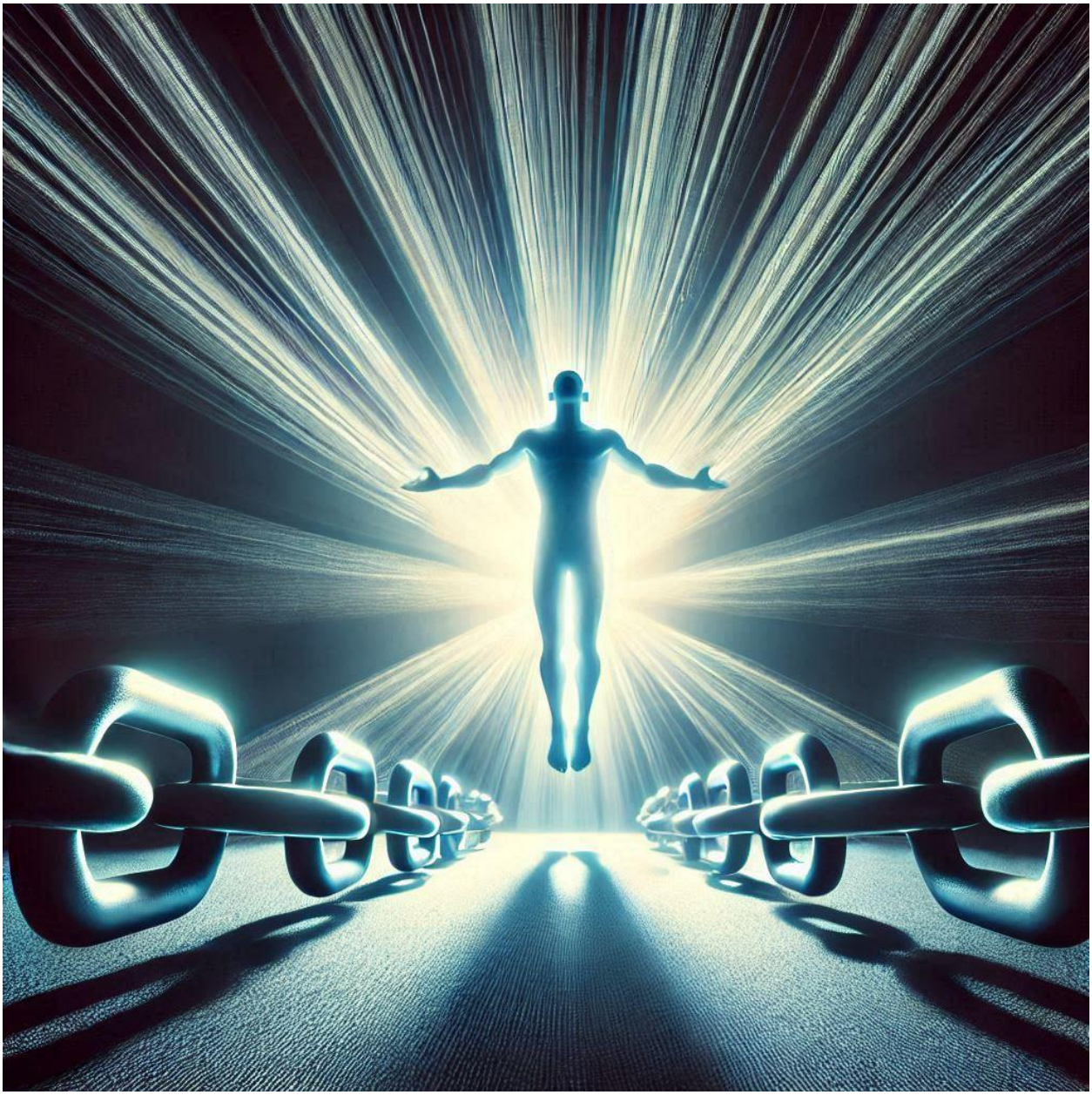
In one of our fellowships, Pastor Alando talked about someone who mentions God when making business presentations even to people who are not Christians. She said that person would mention the verse that he got that idea he is presenting from. I find that as a noble thing to emulate and I am trying to embrace it.

When you know and understand the gospel, you shall find pleasure in going where there is fellowship more than where there is 'fun' because you find fun in fellowship. The way you use your leisure time to go to the friend with the best gossip, when you understand the gospel, you will devote your leisure time to spend it with God. You shall be a seven-days Christian and not just a seventh day Christian.

The Bible says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him (Psalm 34:8, KJV).”

You need to experience Jesus Christ for yourself because no human being is fully equipped to properly explain Jesus to you. When you experience Jesus for yourself, you will preach and teach about Him with boldness, just like Paul did.

Committing to Personal Growth and Transformation



Paul committed to personal growth and transformation, striving to become more like Christ in character and conduct.

Philippians 3:13-14 (KJV) - "[13] Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The original Greek word used for "apprehended" in Philippians 3:13 is κατελάβον (katalabon), which is a form of the verb καταλαμβάνω (katalambanō).

Meaning of καταλαμβάνω (katalambanō):

1. **To lay hold of, seize, or grasp**: It implies the action of taking possession or making something one's own.
2. **To apprehend or attain**: It can also mean to comprehend, understand, or attain a goal.
3. **To overtake**: In some contexts, it can mean to overtake or catch up with.

Paul acknowledges that he has not understood everything even though he had spent so much time studying God's Word. No matter how much time you spend studying God's Word, you cannot understand it fully. This should not discourage you from studying it. It should give you the urge to keep on studying it. The Word of God has neither beginning nor end. For it is God's Word that created the beginning and end. God's Word is infinite.

Paul says even though he does not understand everything, the little that he has understood, he applies ("this one thing I do"). What does he do? He forgets those things which are behind and reaches forth to those things which are before. He presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You should not dwell on the past whether good or bad. When you dwell on the bad that has happened in the past, you make your life sadder and hence you are unable to move on. Therefore, you stagnate or capsize.

When you dwell on the good that has happened in the past i.e., the achievements you have made, you become reluctant to do more. So, you end up doing less in your lifetime than you have ability to do. How does Paul reach out to those things which are before? He does that by pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is committed to personal growth and the best way to foster personal growth is by fostering spiritual growth. Spiritual growth will take care of all other facets of your life. Some people do not do body exercises because of lack of motivation. Spiritual growth will give you that motivation. Some cannot resist unhealthy foods because of lack of self-control. Spiritual growth will give you that self-control. As you press toward the mark of the high calling of God, every area of your life will go higher.

Practicing Generosity and Selflessness

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (KJV) - "[6] But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. [7] Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Paul practiced generosity and selflessness, encouraging believers to share with those in need and to be rich in good works. In everything you do to a person, ask yourself if you are giving to that person or you are taking away from that person. Giving needs to be according to God's

commandments. One may generously offer alcoholic drinks to a person out of a good heart and ignorantly thinks that he has given to that person. The reality is that he has taken away from that person for what he has given is taking away the health of that person.

One can ask you for money to gamble or smoke cigarettes and you generously give them. This is not giving, this is taking away. Generously giving your boyfriend or girlfriend sex before marriage is not giving it is taking away. One may wonder why he is giving and receiving curses instead of receiving blessings. That person should reflect on the kind of gifts he gives if he is truly giving or if he is taking away. If he/she is taking away, that person should be quick to repent and ask God to guide them on how to give and on what to give.

True giving should not expect something in return. Giving that expects something in return is exchange or trade, it is not giving. To have and apply this understanding is quite difficult for the carnal mind. Very few people in this world give without expecting something in return. We only greet those who greet us. We are only kind to those who show kindness to us.

If someone greets us or talks to us with contempt, we respond with contempt. As a result of our selfish nature, we are always in the habit of reciprocation and exchange. Therefore, we exchange darkness with darkness instead of exchanging darkness with light. By the course of our faithless actions, the world becomes darker while we are called as Christians to make it brighter.

Sin moves a person further away from God. Normally, as a human being, when someone moves far away from you, you move far away from them. When someone does not say hi to you, you don’t say hi to them. Jesus Christ showed utmost generosity on the cross when He died for our sins. Instead of moving far away from us, He did something for us that we not only deserved but something that we absolutely did not ask for. No human being gave Jesus the suggestion of dying on the cross.

Many Christians will say they love their enemies because they do not have the feeling of hate for their enemies in their hearts. Some Christians will say that they love their enemies because they are willing to help their enemies whenever their foes seek help. If our enemies do not seek help from us, we would not bother approaching them with help. This is usually a result of the ego we harbor in our hearts as human beings. We do not want to lower our ego. We want to uplift ourselves.

Jesus went out of His way and did for us something so great that we did not ask for. It is like buying your dream car for your worst enemy without him asking for it. Or building your dream house for your worst enemy while you have not built a house for yourself.

When you uplift yourself, people may give you the small respect that you desire but it won't be much compared to when God lifts you. God tells you to humble yourself so that He can uplift you. This is because He wants to uplift you in a way that you cannot uplift yourself. Do not despair when people treat you with contempt and do not try hard to prove to them that you are higher than they think you are.

Be kind to those who are unkind to you. When you do that, two things may happen. They may get converted by virtue of your example and start being kind to you. Secondly, they may take advantage and treat you with more contempt. Either of these two events happening will turn out to your favor. Those who will get converted and treat you well will turn out to your favor as you won't receive the unkindness that you used to encounter. If they take advantage and treat you with more contempt, it will also turn to your favor. What will happen is, as they lower the value of you in their minds, God will use that opportunity to lift you to a level that they never imagined.

We can see this in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus was always begging at the table of the rich man. Every day he would go to beg and as he begged, the rich man treated him with more contempt. In the afterlife, Lazarus was highly exalted and God placed him at a level that was way beyond the level of the rich man.

Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the most humiliating death, the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). While still alive, many people treated Him with contempt as He treated them with love. After He died and resurrected, He ascended to heaven to a place that is unfathomably above. A place where those who mistreated him cannot reach with their combined efforts and minds. Besides that, He was given a name above every name, that every knee in every place shall bow at the sound of His name (Philippians 2:9-11).

When you are humble on this earth, you will be exalted in the afterlife like Lazarus and Jesus. You will be exalted on this earth and in this life as well. This is the reason: God desires to save everyone, as He does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). Because God does not want anyone to perish,

He will exalt you in front of them, so that when they see the height that God has lifted His humble servant, they too will humble themselves and get converted.

Rejoicing in the Hope of the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (KJV) - "[20] But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Paul rejoiced in the hope of the resurrection and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. When death came, man was saddened. God created man to enjoy His creation. By interacting with God's creation, man became happy. God warned Adam and Eve that if they eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they will surely die. Death creates a time limit which results in shortening the happiness that man is meant to gain.

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. In other words, the wages of sin is shortened happiness. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy. Through Adam, man's happiness was cut short. Through Christ, that joy that was once cut short was reclaimed. Christ symbolized this through His resurrection. When Jesus died, those who loved Him were saddened by His death. He died on Friday and people were expecting to have an entire weekend full of doom and gloom.

No sooner had the Sabbath ended, than Christ rose again on Sunday (Matthew 28:1). In other words, while they were still mourning Jesus, He rose again faster than they had expected. People cry when someone dies because they think that it will take a long time before they see that person again. Some think that they will never see that person again. The hope of the resurrection is that those people who have died in Christ will rise again. Not only will they rise again, but they will rise sooner than we expect, just as Jesus did.

Fulfilling His Ministry with Diligence

Acts 20:24 (KJV) - "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Paul diligently fulfilled his ministry, striving to preach the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, laboring tirelessly to bring others to faith in Christ. Are you diligent enough on God's work? Or do you just do the bare minimum? Paul was extremely diligent that he held God's work dearly than he held his life. Fear of losing one's life has made many Christians not to serve God diligently as they should. Some of us fear going to preach to some places because of the weather conditions. The question is, who created the weather?

Some fear going to preach because of the inabilities we have, the same way Moses feared because of his inability to be fluent in speech. God asked Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? (Exodus 4:11)" Who gives men the ability to do the things that they do? Some fear because of hostile communities. Pray to God to take away all the fear that you have and replace it with faith. Fear will block you from being a blessing to those you are meant to be a blessing to but faith will enable you to bless more people than you ever thought you would bless.

Paul says that the ministry he has received is of the Lord Jesus. The work you are ordained to do is not your own, it is God's. Therefore, God will provide everything you need to accomplish it. Your job is to be diligent in it. As you collaborate with God in doing his work, you become more selfless and happier.

Maintaining Confidence in God's Provision

Philippians 4:19 (KJV) - "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Throughout his ministry, Paul maintained confidence in God's provision, trusting in God's faithfulness to meet all his needs. God will supply all that you need when you need it. Therefore, as a Christian it is pointless to worry. You need to know that what you have at the moment is all you need. Be content and have peace of mind as you strive to help others.

Peace of mind will enable you to be more productive in your endeavors and your output will be of a higher quality. God's riches are infinite. He can never run out of supply since He has the ability to create more. The parts of this earth that human beings have explored are less than the unexplored parts. All of them are owned by God. He shall supply what you need if you can only trust Him.

Leaving a Legacy of Faith and Service

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV) - "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Paul left a lasting legacy of faith and service, inspiring countless believers through his example and teachings. Ask yourself if you die today or if Jesus comes back are you able to say you have fought the good fight? Fighting a good fight for a Christian means being in the habit of adding value to others. You do not need to have much money to add value to others as many are deceived to believe.

You need to know your gift or gifts and know how you can use them to add value to others. Adding value to others should be done daily. It can be something as simple as giving someone a compliment. It can be done through sharing a Bible verse on social media or in someone's inbox. It can even be greeting a stranger. It can be lessening the work of someone. Aim to add value to someone in all that you do, all the time. Fight the good fight.

Final Words of Encouragement and Exhortation

2 Timothy 4:6 (KJV) - "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

In his final letters, Paul offered words of encouragement and exhortation to his fellow believers, urging them to stand firm in the faith and to persevere in godliness. Like Jesus, Paul informed people when he was about to leave. He told them this to prepare them to carry out the remaining work. He constantly encouraged them. Encouragement is a very simple thing to do but it goes a long way. Learn to be in the habit of encouraging others.

Entrusting His Work to Faithful Disciples

Paul entrusted his work to faithful disciples, passing on the torch of ministry to future generations of believers.

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV) - "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

The Bible tells us to do unto others as we would like them to do unto us (Matthew 7:12). Paul is telling his disciples to make more disciples. As you have been taught the truth, you need to teach others as well. One of the highest achievements a pastor can make is not merely to convert someone, but to make another pastor. When I say another pastor, I do not necessarily mean someone who has studied theology and officially ordained. I mean someone who goes out there and uses his gifts to preach the gospel. We get excited when people get converted and are baptized in the faith.

Our excitement should not stop there because that is just the beginning, not the end. After they are converted, we should do our best to make sure they are disciples and are also working to convert others. Our job is to make more leaders, not more followers. Our aim should be that those leaders whom we've made surpass our achievements. A teacher feels more fulfilled when the student they have taught ends up being greater than them.

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Receiving a Crown of Righteousness

At the end of his earthly journey, Paul looked forward to receiving a crown of righteousness from the Lord, as a reward for his faithful service and enduring faith.

2 Timothy 4:8 (KJV) - "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

God shall give a crown of righteousness to all His faithful and righteous people. Paul was confident that by God's grace, he shall receive a crown of righteousness. The crown we are going to receive is like an award for overcoming sin. 1 Corinthians 9:24 (KJV) - "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

When trying to obtain other rewards, it seems like the reward is running away from you. It often seems like you are chasing the wind. Rewards of the world as glorious as they may seem are nothing compared to the final reward that God is going to reward us with. The beauty about God's reward is that it runs towards you as you run toward it. In fact, it runs faster toward you than you run to it. The father to the prodigal son ran to meet him when the son was still afar off on the way. He got to where the son was before the son got to where the father was.

Since we are used to things of the world being hard to find, we believe that is the same case with things of God. Heaven is more glorious than the most glorious place on earth. All our imaginations combined cannot fathom the glory and the beauty of heaven. The good news is God wants us to go to heaven more than we want to. Therefore, He has made it absolutely easy for us through His loving grace. He just wants us to humble ourselves and give our lives to Him. It is humility before God that is going to uplift us.

Revelation 22:12 (KJV) - "And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the life and testimony of the Apostle Paul, who showed unwavering faith and commitment to You. Help me to see Your light and be transformed by it daily. Teach me to submit to Your will, endure challenges with grace, and encourage others in their faith journey. Fill my heart with joy and gratitude, even in difficult circumstances. Guide me to love selflessly, stand firm in faith, and boldly share Your truth. May I leave a legacy of faith that brings glory to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity

1. Encourage someone in their faith journey. Write or share a heartfelt message, scripture, or prayer with a fellow believer. Check in on someone you know who might be struggling in their faith or life and remind them of God's promises.
2. Model selflessness and generosity. Identify a need in your community or church and take practical steps to meet it—whether by giving your time, resources, or emotional support. Volunteer for a cause that aligns with Christ's mission of love and compassion.
3. Commit to joyful gratitude. Each day, write down three things you're thankful for, even in challenging situations. Consider sharing your gratitude with others, inspiring them to adopt a similar perspective.
4. Pray for others. Dedicate time to pray specifically for the spiritual growth and well-being of your family, friends, or church members. Include prayers for global believers enduring persecution, just as Paul often prayed for churches far away.
5. Deepen your knowledge of God's Word. Choose a letter written by Paul, such as Philippians or Romans, and study it thoroughly. Reflect on how his teachings can shape your perspective and actions.
6. Embrace Christlike humility and love. Practice humility by putting others' needs before your own. Find one opportunity this week to show love through acts of service, especially to someone you don't naturally connect with.
7. Stand firm in faith. Identify an area in your life where doubt or fear challenges your faith. Memorize and meditate on scriptures that remind you of God's faithfulness, such as 2 Timothy 1:7 or Romans 8:28.
8. Share the gospel boldly. Take a step to share your testimony or invite someone to learn more about Jesus. If you're hesitant, start by praying for courage and clarity.
9. Practice joyful worship in all circumstances. No matter what challenges arise this week, intentionally choose to worship God through song, prayer, or even writing a psalm of your own, expressing your trust and love for Him.
10. Leave a legacy of faith. Consider the example you're setting for those around you—family, friends, or colleagues. Take steps to mentor someone younger in their faith, offering guidance and encouragement just as Paul discipled others.

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CHAPTER 85

FAITH TESTED IN PERSECUTION

They were stoned and sawn asunder,

They had strong faith, unmoved by human thunder,

They braved the flood of mockery's surging,

Bound in chains, their hearts never diverging,

Others endured trials of mockings and scourgings,

Bonds and imprisonment, some left with no belongings,

Enduring physical pain trusting in God through tough times,

Their faith a melody echoing through eternal rhymes.

In dens and caves, their shelters small,

Yet God's great hand upheld them all,

Bruised and beaten, bound in chains,

Yet none would yield to worldly pains.

Their spirits held a strength inside,

For they let Christ in their hearts abide,

Nothing can stop you when God is by your side,

Have faith, no fear and have no pride.

Hebrews 11:36-38 (KJ21) - "[36] And others endured the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. [37] They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. [38] (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

While talking about faith, Hebrews 11:36-38 tells us that there were people who had faith even in times of persecution. They endured mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, and they were slain with the sword.

While preaching a sermon on persecution, Daniel Arwonga said, “Under the load of affliction, a Christian can do more than when engaged in normal service.” He also said, “It is under trial that God’s people are the greatest witnesses.” Persecution when engaged in righteous service always comes as a blessing in disguise. It comes to sharpen and strengthen you.

“Jesus did not interpose to deliver His servant. He knew that John would bear the test. Gladly would the Saviour have come to John, to brighten the dungeon gloom with His own presence. But He was not to place Himself in the hands of enemies and imperil His own mission. Gladly would He have delivered His faithful servant. But for the sake of thousands who in after years must pass from prison to death, John was to drink the cup of martyrdom. As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, or the fagot, apparently forsaken by God and man, what a stay to their hearts would be the thought that John the Baptist, to whose faithfulness Christ Himself had borne witness, had passed through a similar experience!” – The Desire of Ages, Page 224.2, Ellen G. White.

Jesus did not interfere to deliver John in his affliction because He knew that John could bear the test. No trial comes to you that you cannot bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). No persecution comes to you which is impossible for you to bear.

Some did not even have decent clothes to wear as they were working for the Lord. Thus, they wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented. They wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth. A world filled with darkness was not worthy of these people of light but in humility they still shone their light in the world. The world did not appreciate that; so, they persecuted them.

Who were these people?

Abel

Genesis 4:6-8 (KJ21) - "[6] And the Lord said unto Cain, "Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? [7] If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." [8] And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him."

Abel was the first person of faith to be persecuted. He was killed by Cain, his blood brother because of doing what was right in God's sight. God was pleased by Abel's righteous offering, but He was not pleased with Cain's. God wanted a lamb for a sacrifice, Abel obeyed and offered a lamb to God.

Cain did not obey; he offered fruits to God. He thought that what he had (since he was a tiller of the ground) could substitute God's requirements. That is what many Christians think. They do not want to obey God's exact words. Therefore, they come up with creative but sinful methods to substitute the requirements of God just like Cain did.

Abel was Cain's brother, meaning he was close to him in relation. If he had no lamb and had borrowed a lamb from Abel, Abel would have given it to him. He neglected asking for help from his brother, thus neglecting association with one whom he came with from the same womb. Many people suffer because of avoiding associations. The pride and fear that is in their hearts makes them think that they can do it all by themselves.

Hebrews 11:4 (KJV) - "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

The Bible says that even after Abel is dead, he still speaks. He does not speak with his mouth because he is dead. His righteous action of offering to God the sacrifice that God required and other righteous actions he did, still speak. Righteousness goes beyond mortality. Righteousness goes to eternity. Faith in God gives one an infinite influence.

When Cain killed Abel, he thought that he had shut him up completely. However, he was wrong because the Bible tells us Abel still speaks even after death. When people persecute you, they persecute you so that you will stop spreading God's Word. They can stop you, but they cannot stop God's Word. They cannot stop the righteous actions that you did from having an influence upon people.

William Tyndale was a scholar and theologian who is best known for translating the Bible into English. His translation work made the Scriptures accessible to English-speaking people in a way that had not been available before, and it significantly influenced future English translations, including the King James Version.

Tyndale's translation work was considered illegal at the time because the Roman Catholic Church opposed translating the Bible into vernacular languages. As a result, Tyndale faced persecution. He was arrested in 1535 and, after being imprisoned for over a year, was executed in 1536. He was strangled and then burned at the stake for heresy.

Even though Tyndale was killed, his work of translating the Bible to English still speaks. Righteousness is God and God is righteousness. You can physically stop a righteous messenger, but you cannot stop his righteous work. Faith in God goes a long way more than you can imagine. That is one reason why God rewards faith.

Joseph

Genesis 37:18-20 (KJ21) - "[18] And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. [19] And they said one to another, "Behold, this dreamer cometh. [20] Come now therefore and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, 'Some evil beast hath devoured him'; and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him. They did not like his God-given dreams, and they did not like how he was faithful to his father than them. They also did not like how his father loved him. They conspired to kill him. They thought they would stop his righteousness by killing him.

Reuben suggested that Joseph should not be killed (Genesis 37:21-22). Reuben, the eldest brother, convinced the others not to kill Joseph and suggested they throw him into a pit instead, intending

to rescue him later and return him to their father. Judah suggested that Joseph should be sold into slavery (Genesis 37:26-27). Judah proposed selling Joseph to a passing caravan of Ishmaelites (Midianites), which the brothers agreed to. This ultimately led to Joseph being taken to Egypt.

When Joseph's brothers sold him to slavery, they thought that they had destroyed his destiny and that the dreams of him leading them would not come true. Him being a slave in Egypt (a pagan nation) meant that he would be below them since they were free citizens in the land of Canaan. What they did not know is that God is everywhere, and He elevates His faithful servants wherever they go.

God elevated Joseph in Potiphar's house because Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and that He made everything in Potiphar's house to prosper. Later, Potiphar's wife tried to bring Joseph down by false accusation. Potiphar's wife had attempted to get Joseph in temptation, but Joseph resisted that temptation and chose righteousness. Potiphar's wife was angry, and he accused Joseph of trying to abuse her.

Thus, Joseph was thrown in prison for thirteen years, from the age of seventeen to the age of thirty. Potiphar's wife thought that conspiring to send Joseph to prison would bring Joseph down. However, it lifted him up in that Joseph was elevated to a higher position than her husband Potiphar. Persecution for righteousness' sake leads to elevation (a higher position than those who have persecuted you) which is why God calls those who are persecuted for His sake, "Blessed" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Moses

Numbers 12:1-16 (KJ21) - "[1] And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married, for he had married an Ethiopian woman. [2] And they said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?" And the Lord heard it. [3] (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth.) [4] And the Lord spoke suddenly unto Moses and unto Aaron and unto Miriam: "Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation." And the three came out. [5] And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth. [6] And He said, "Hear now My words: If there be a prophet

among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. [7] My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. [8] With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even plainly, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Why then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" [9] And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He departed. [10] And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle. And behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. [11] And Aaron said unto Moses, "Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly and wherein we have sinned. [12] Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb." [13] And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee." [14] And the Lord said unto Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again." [15] And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. [16] And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth and pitched camp in the Wilderness of Paran."

In those days, Moses was the humblest person on earth. I believe that is why God gave him the great responsibility of leading the Israelites. God blesses people who are meek with magnanimous blessings. I have observed and have realized that the humbler one is, the more that person is blessed by God. You may be praying for a certain blessing and God has not given you yet because He is waiting for you to be humble so that He can give you.

We are told that Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother respectively gossiped Moses' wife because she was Ethiopian. They did not malign her because of something wrong she had done (although it is also wrong to trash-talk sinners). They talked against her because of her heritage. Her being different from them was a problem for them.

In this context, we are told that Moses was meek meaning he could barely fight for himself. Many people falsely believe that if you are humble, you will fail in life because people will be using you as a doormat (stepping on you the way they want). God proves such people wrong by fighting for you (Exodus 14:14) even in the smallest battle.

Aaron and Miriam had done something which many would consider a small thing to Moses. They had denigrated his wife. They did not fight her physically, they just gossiped about her. Gossiping

is a common thing among human beings, even in our churches. Talking down on Zipporah caused God to smite Miriam with leprosy. Moses, in his love, felt that the punishment was too harsh. He even pleaded with God to take the leprosy away from Miriam, but God did not agree.

God caused Miriam to be leprous for seven days. He put the deadliest disease at that time on someone just because that person slandered his brother's wife. You might not know but there are some people who are sick or facing certain problems because they have talked bad things about you behind your back. You might even be praying for some of the people who you do not know are against you. It is good to continue praying for them even when you know they are against you. Moses pleaded with God to take away the disease from Miriam even after he knew she was against him.

Exodus 17:3-4 (KJV) - "[3] And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? [4] And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me."

At Rephidim, the people thirsted for water. They murmured against Moses and wished that they had stayed in Egypt. Previously, they had cried to God to take them out of slavery. When God took them out of slavery, they began complaining. They were expecting things to be smooth immediately after they had left Egypt. Little did they know that things do not always work that way.

When you are going from one country to another (especially by foot), at the border you must pass a place called "no man's land." No man's land means that the land you are going through does not belong to any country. No law governs that land. God usually uses a similar principle when He is transitioning someone upwards. He used the same principle on the Israelites by making them go through the wilderness experience before taking them to the Promised Land.

The wilderness experience was not smooth, but it was better than Egypt. It would have been more seamless for them if they had kept more trust in God. The one-day thirst made them complain to Moses. Not only did they complain but they also wanted to stone him.

When God calls you for leadership in any sphere, He is not calling you for an easy responsibility. He knows that by yourself you would not be able to handle it, but He expects you to depend on

Him in every step you take. While facing that tough circumstance, Moses prayed to God, leaning on the everlasting arms to hold him and to give him direction.

Numbers 14:10 (KJV) - "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel."

When the Israelites rebelled and wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, God's anger was kindled, and He threatened to destroy the Israelites and start a new nation through Moses. However, Moses interceded on behalf of the people, pleading with God to show mercy and spare them (Numbers 14:11-19). Moses reminded God of His reputation among the nations and appealed to His steadfast love and mercy.

If Moses was selfish, he would have told God to go ahead and start a new nation through him. However, God had cultivated a spirit of selflessness inside Moses that caused Moses to plead for the Israelites no matter how much they used to trouble him.

Moses was not thinking of himself. He was thinking of God’s reputation among the nations. He esteemed God more than he esteemed himself. He wanted God to have a better name than him that is why he pleaded with God to have mercy on the Israelites.

Moses' prayers spared the Israelites from immediate destruction, but God decreed that the entire generation that rebelled would not enter the Promised Land. Instead, they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation passed away, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. This judgment also impacted Moses, as he had to continue leading the people through this challenging period of wandering.

Moses’ cry to God to have mercy on the Israelites affected him. He had to endure suffering with the Israelite majority. Most of the Israelites were not part of his nuclear family or even close extended family but He chose to endure suffering with them for all those forty years. That is the character of God. God would have destroyed us a long time ago and lived happily because of the sins we commit but He chose to be long suffering to us. Sin pains God greatly but since He does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9), He is ever patient with us.

Though Moses wasn’t punished in Numbers 14, his leadership journey with the rebellious Israelites eventually led to his own moment of disobedience. In Numbers 20:7-12, Moses struck

the rock to bring forth water instead of speaking to it as God commanded, and as a result, God told Moses he would not enter the Promised Land either. Moses suffered for long with the disobedient Israelites that they led him to sin making him not enter the promised land.

Numbers 16:41-42 (KJV) - "[41] But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. [42] And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared."

In Numbers 16:41-42, after the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the Israelites continued to murmur against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of causing the death of the rebels, who had been swallowed up by the earth or consumed by fire from the Lord. This ongoing rebellion directly affected Moses in several ways:

The people blamed Moses and Aaron for the deaths, even though it was God who had executed judgment. This demonstrated that the Israelites still doubted Moses' leadership and questioned his role, even after God had clearly shown His support for Moses by intervening in the rebellion.

The people's rebellion added emotional and spiritual pressure on Moses, as he had to constantly defend his leadership, intercede for the people, and deal with their complaints. Leading a rebellious and ungrateful nation became a significant burden for him.

When the congregation gathered against Moses and Aaron, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud at the tabernacle, a sign of God’s presence and impending action. Moses and Aaron were often the mediators between God and the people, and the appearance of God's glory was a sign that another judgment was imminent. As a result, Moses was once again faced with the responsibility of interceding for the people to prevent further destruction.

Moses, along with Aaron, was repeatedly thrust into the position of pleading with God on behalf of the Israelites to spare them from immediate destruction. In the verses following this passage, a plague begins, and Moses quickly instructs Aaron to make atonement for the people to stop the plague (Numbers 16:46-48), showing how Moses' constant intercession was necessary to protect the people from God’s wrath.

Moses sacrificed a lot in his leadership journey, enduring various forms of persecution for righteousness' sake. Despite the people angering him, he never stopped praying for them. This is a powerful lesson for you and me on how to treat those who persecute us.

David

1 Samuel 18:10-11 (KJ21) - “[10] And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house. And David played with his hand, as at other times; and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. [11] And Saul cast the javelin, for he said, "I will smite David even to the wall with it." And David avoided out of his presence twice.”

God allowed an evil spirit to enter Saul because Saul had tightly held on to wickedness. When the evil spirit came upon him, he forgot how good David was to him before. Satan and evil know no friends. Jesus was always good to everyone, including His disciples. He gave His disciples privileges that He would not give to other people because they were close to Him. However, Judas chose to betray Him.

God knew that when the evil spirit entered Saul, Saul would want to kill David, His chosen servant. God was not afraid that David would get killed because He knew that David trusted in Him and He would protect Him from all danger. God directed David to avoid Saul twice, thus David was saved alive.

Elijah

1 Kings 19:1-3 (KJ21) - “[1] And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. [2] Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." [3] And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.”

King Ahab told his wife Jezebel how Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal with a sword. Jezebel, being evil, sent a message to Elijah that she would slay him like he slayed the prophets of Baal. When Elijah heard that Jezebel wanted to persecute him, he ran for his life and went to Beersheba.

As much as Elijah was a man of faith, he might have had a little bit of fear when he heard that Jezebel was planning to kill him. Little did he know that God's plan for him was to take him to heaven directly in a chariot without facing death. We should not fear the Devil's plans. God's plan for our lives overshadows all evil plans.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 11:18-23 (AMP) - "[18] The Lord made it known to me and I knew it; then You [O Lord] showed me their doings. [19] But I was like a gentle and tame lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised plots and schemes against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will be remembered no more." [20] But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have committed my cause. [21] Therefore thus says the Lord in regard to the men of Anathoth, who seek your life [Jeremiah], saying, "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, so that you will not die by our hand"; [22] therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, I am about to punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and their daughters will die by famine; [23] and there will be no remnant [left] of them, for I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth in the year of their punishment.""

Jeremiah compares himself to a gentle and tame lamb brought to be slaughtered not knowing what the people of his hometown had plotted against him. In other words, he was innocent. Since God protects His innocent obedient children, He showed Jeremiah their plans against Him. The people of Anathoth, including some of his own relatives and priests had planned to kill him because they were offended by his prophecies, which warned of coming judgment due to their disobedience to God.

Sometimes you might face danger while preaching the truth. The people's desire was to silence the weeping prophet because the message that God had given him seemed like a threat to their way

of life and false sense of security. The Anathoth people sought to eliminate Jeremiah entirely so that his name would be forgotten. They had not yet killed Jeremiah but were intending to kill him.

In Jeremiah 11:22-23, God assured Jeremiah that He would punish those people for their evil intentions. It is dangerous to plan evil (let alone to do) against a servant of God. God passed judgment on them. He said that their young men would die by the sword and the rest of the town would face famine, leaving no remnant. In this episode, it is clear that no weapon formed against a child of God will prosper. It is also crystal clear that no plan to form a weapon against God's children will prosper.

Jeremiah 20:1-6 (AMP) - "[1] Now Pashhur the son of Immer, the priest who was chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. [2] Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate by the house of the Lord. 3 But on the next day, Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, "The Lord does not call your name Pashhur, but Magor-missabib (meaning terror on every side). [4] For thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am going to make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and while your eyes look on, they will fall by the sword of their enemies. So I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will carry them away to Babylon and will slaughter them with the sword. [5] Moreover, I will give all the wealth of this city, all its produce and all its costly things, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah; I will give it all into the hand of their enemies, who will plunder them, take them, and carry them to Babylon. [6] And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into captivity; and you will go to Babylon, and there you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have falsely prophesied.'"

When Pashhur, the son of Immer the priest, heard Jeremiah prophesying, he struck Jeremiah. Turning the knife after the stab and twisting the ankle that was already sprained, Pashhur locked Jeremiah in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin gate by the House of the Lord. In those days and even today, priests are highly respected. Not only are they highly regarded but they are also viewed by many as the most holy people.

In the case of Jeremiah, it was a priest who was persecuting him. When people would see a priest persecuting Jeremiah, they would most likely rush to conclude that Jeremiah was the one in the wrong while the priest was right. This ideology is a misleading one. Sin should be viewed as sin no matter who has committed it, and guidance should come from the Bible alone.

We should not be biased towards people because of the titles and positions that they possess. We should be unbiased towards people regardless of the societal cluster they are in. This is because such biases have done a great and award-winning job in weakening the church.

We should respect people in positions of authority everywhere we go, but we should not accept their words and actions as final without proving them from the Bible. Some people in high authoritative church positions have committed crimes in church that are worthy of prosecution in a court of law, but you will see people taking sides with them because they give money or because they have big titles.

I do not mean that we should speak to them harshly when they make mistakes. Nor do I mean that we should be cruel to them whenever they make a mistake. When they do something wrong, we should exercise love and mercy in handling them. But, we should treat the issue with fairness so that the other offended party can receive justice in equal measure.

The priest Pashhur struck Jeremiah and kept him in stocks. When Jeremiah was taken out, he still told the same man who had locked him in the stocks the truth. When the truth is in you and when the powerful Spirit of Truth is in you, you will fear no evil because God is in you and with you. Satan’s agents use persecution to silence the truth, not knowing that God cannot be silenced.

Having faced the wrath of Pashhur, Jeremiah knew how dangerous that priest was. However, he did not wait to heal first before telling him the truth. He told him the truth immediately. When God’s Spirit is in you, you won’t stay beaten down on the ground forever. You get beaten down once and you fall but God’s Spirit makes you rise up again with more power.

Immediately after Jeremiah was taken out of the stocks, he told Pashhur that God no longer calls him Pashhur. Instead, He calls him Magor-missabib. The name Pashhur is believed to mean "freedom" or "prosperity" in Hebrew. It may also carry the sense of being "set free" or "one who enlarges."

God renames Pashhur to Magor-missabib, which in Hebrew means "terror on every side" or "fear on every side." This name change is symbolic of the judgment and fear that Pashhur would experience for falsely prophesying peace when destruction was imminent.

Jeremiah told Pashhur that God was going to make him a terror to himself and to all his friends. He told Pashhur that He will make his friends and the men of Judah fall by the sword of their enemies and Pashhur will witness all that happening. God promised to give the entire nation of Judah into the hands of the Babylonian king (and He did that), who would carry them away to Babylon and slaughter them with the sword.

God also promised to give the wealth of the city to the hands of their enemies, to be plundered and to be taken to Babylon. Lastly, He promised Pashhur the priest and all those who lived in his house that they would go into captivity to Babylon, and they would die and get buried in Babylon. In other words, they would die as slaves.

All his friends whom he had falsely prophesied too would also die as slaves. Someone who persecutes righteous people prepares a deadly trap for himself. The captivity Pashhur tried to bring Jeremiah to ended up being his own captivity.

Daniel

Daniel 6:25-28 (KJ21) - "[25] Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied unto you. [26] I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God and steadfast forever, and His Kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. [27] He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." [28] So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

King Darius set 120 princes over his kingdom and appointed three presidents to oversee them, with Daniel being one of the three. Due to Daniel's spirit of excellence, the king set him over the entire realm. Excellence is a Godly quality. Therefore, ask God to cultivate the spirit of excellence in you. When you are excellent, you will automatically get promoted in all the spheres that you take part in.

Out of jealousy, the other presidents and princes sought to find fault with Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they found no error or fault in him because he was faithful. They realized the only way to accuse him would be in matters concerning the law of his God.

Satan tries so hard to bring you down through temptations. He wants to find fault in you so that he can have legal grounds to attack you. When it seems too difficult for you to get into temptations, he tries to bring you down by your obedience to God. That is why he brought persecution to Daniel and that is why he brings persecution to you. He brings persecution so that you can get discouraged and stop being loyal to God.

The officials persuaded King Darius to sign a decree stating that no one could ask a petition of any god or man for 30 days, except the king, or they would be cast into the den of lions. Once the decree was signed, Daniel, knowing this, continued his practice of praying three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem.

Daniel’s adversaries caught him praying and reported it to the king. Daniel did not fear the threat of being thrown into the lion’s den no matter how deadly it sounded. He continued to worship God openly. His action shows unshakeable faith.

Although King Darius was displeased with himself for being trapped by his own law, he had no choice but to carry out the decree. He ordered Daniel to be cast into the lions' den but expressed hope that Daniel’s God would deliver him. That night, the king fasted and could not sleep.

At the break of day, Daniel hurried to the lions' den and cried out to Daniel. To his great relief, Daniel responded, saying that God had sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths, and no harm had come to him because he was innocent before both God and the king.

The king, overjoyed, commanded that Daniel be brought out of the den unharmed. He then ordered that those men who had accused Daniel, along with their families, be cast into the den, where the lions immediately overpowered them. They ended up falling into the same trap that they had set for Daniel. Do not form traps for yourself by trying to make life difficult for a child of God.

Following this, King Darius wrote to all the people of his kingdom, declaring that they should fear and reverence the God of Daniel, acknowledging Him as the living God whose kingdom will never be destroyed and who performs great signs and wonders. The chapter concludes by stating that

Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and into the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Righteousness always results in true prosperity.

“From the story of Daniel's deliverance we may learn that in seasons of trial and gloom God's children should be just what they were when their prospects were bright with hope and their surroundings all that they could desire. Daniel in the lions’ den was the same Daniel who stood before the king as chief among the ministers of state and as a prophet of the Most High. A man whose heart is stayed upon God will be the same in the hour of his greatest trial as he is in prosperity, when the light and favor of God and of man beam upon him. Faith reaches to the unseen, and grasps eternal realities.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 545.2, Ellen G. White.

“Heaven is very near those who suffer for righteousness’ sake. Christ identifies His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints, and whoever touches His chosen ones touches Him. The power that is near to deliver from physical harm or distress is also near to save from the greater evil, making it possible for the servant of God to maintain his integrity under all circumstances, and to triumph through divine grace.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 545.3, Ellen G. White.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Daniel 3:15-18 (KJ21) - "[15] Now if ye be ready so that at the time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, it is well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" [16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not fear to answer thee in this matter. [17] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from

the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set up a massive golden statue and commanded everyone in his kingdom to bow down and worship it. The king begins with the leaders of the kingdom who are: the governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces. He calls them to come and dedicate the image which he set up (Daniel 3:2, KJV). All those leaders went to dedicate the image according to the decree that the Babylonian monarch had issued (Daniel 3:3, KJV).

After the dedication of the golden image, all people (Daniel 3:4, KJV) were commanded to worship the image once they heard the music being played.

Everybody obeyed the king's command. When they heard the music playing, they bowed down to worship the image (Daniel 3:7).

Certain Chaldeans went before the king to accuse some jews for not worshiping the golden image (Daniel 3:8). When they went before the king, they accused certain Jews of disobeying the king's command (Daniel 3:12). The Bible uses the phrase, "certain Jews (Daniel 3:12, KJV). This phrase means that there were few who refused to worship the idol. This also means that the majority of the Jews who knew the true God fell down to worship the golden image.

The Devil is always doing his best from time immemorial to corrupt the church. Like in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, not many people in church believe in God wholeheartedly. Few are willing to obey God in uncomfortable circumstances.

The people accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whom the king had set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. These three leaders wanted to lead the people they were leading to righteousness. That is the main reason why God, through Nebuchadnezzar, gave them the leadership positions. God desires to have genuine Christians as leaders in every sphere. Unfortunately, He cannot find many genuine Christians. Therefore, leadership ends up being taken up by worldly people.

The king had entrusted these three Hebrew boys with leadership positions. The ones who went to accuse them might have felt jealous because of the leadership positions that the Hebrew boys held. They may have wanted them to get eliminated so that they could replace them in those positions. The higher one goes, the greater opposition they face. Everybody wants what you have. Some will oppose you openly while some will dress themselves as friends just to bring you down. Genuine Christians who face persecution face it because they are a threat to Satan's kingdom.

"As the three Hebrews stood before the king, he was convinced that they possessed something the other wise men of his kingdom did not have. They had been faithful in the performance of every duty. He would give them another trial. If only they would signify their willingness to unite with the multitude in worshiping the image, all would be well with them; "but if ye worship not," he added, "ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Then with his hand stretched upward in defiance, he demanded, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"" - Prophets and Kings, Page 507.2, Ellen G. White.

"In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn the men from their allegiance to the Ruler of the universe. From the history of their fathers they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the foundation of all true prosperity. Calmly facing the furnace, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so [if this is your decision], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Their faith strengthened as they declared that God would be glorified by delivering them, and with triumphant assurance born of implicit trust in God, they added, "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."" - Prophets and Kings, Page 507.3, Ellen G. White.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three Jewish officials, refused to bow to the statue, citing their faith in God. The most powerful king on earth at that time could not believe that there were people who could disobey him. He had to call them to ask them if it is true that they had refused to bow down to the golden image which he set up.

Boldly, the three Hebrew boys told the king to his face that they would not bow down to the golden image. With their deep trust in God, they told the king that they know that their God is able to deliver them from the fiery furnace that Nebuchadnezzar had threatened to throw them in. In other

words, they told the king that there is a being (God) who is greater than the most powerful king, Nebuchadnezzar.

How I pray that our faith in God could be at that level. Our faith cannot be at that level when the only time we remember God during the week is when we go to church. The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8). It uses the word, "Remember." When it uses the word, "Remember," it does not mean that we should remember to prepare ourselves on Saturday and go to church. This means that the Sabbath needs to be remembered throughout the entire week. It needs to be at the top of our minds every single day.

Our focus should not be merely on the day but it should be on Jesus, who is the Lord of the Sabbath. We need to constantly commune with God, praying, studying, and meditating on His Word so that we can grow our faith to that level or higher. By faith, the Almighty God (who is invisible at the moment) needs to be real in our lives. We should be able to know and truly believe in what He is able to do, just like the three Hebrew boys.

The three young Jews told the king that if God will not deliver them, they will still not bow down to the golden image. They were willing to serve God and to defend His holy law even at the face of death. They placed God's commandments above their lives.

This is how they would have defeated the king: The king would have defeated them if they got terrified by his threat and agreed to worship the image because the threat would work as it would make them do what the king wanted. However, they would defeat the king when they refused and perished in the fire because the king would not have made them to do what he wanted them to do.

When you give in because you are threatened by persecution, you have lost the battle. When you give in because you gave been persecuted but they have still left you alive, you have lost the battle too. When you refuse to give in to persecution and they have no choice but to kill you, you have won. That is because they have failed in making you do what they wanted you to do.

Furiously and foolishly, the king ordered them to be thrown into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than usual (Daniel 3:19). He commanded the mightiest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and to throw them into the burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3:20).

King Nebuchadnezzar made sure that the fire was extremely hot so that the three Hebrew Boys would have no chance of surviving. His aim was to burn them completely so that they would leave no ashes. He commanded the most physically strong men to throw the young men in the fire. He wanted to ensure that they would get in the fire and would not resist entering the fire by being stronger than the men who took them there. Therefore, he had to get men who were physically stronger than them to put them in the burning fiery furnace.

The men who threw them there were physically stronger than them but not spiritually strong as them. The fire was so hot that those physically strong men died without actually entering the furnace. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not as physically strong as them but they were spiritually strong. They were thrown in the middle of the extremely hot fire but they still survived. This is clear evidence that spiritual strength is stronger than physical strength.

“But the Lord did not forget His own. As His witnesses were cast into the furnace, the Saviour revealed Himself to them in person, and together they walked in the midst of the fire. In the presence of the Lord of heat and cold, the flames lost their power to consume.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 508.3, Ellen G. White.

Despite the intense heat, the three men were miraculously unharmed by the fire. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished to see that the three Hebrew boys were still alive and a fourth figure, described as "like the Son of God," walking with them in the fire.

“How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.” - Prophets and Kings, Page 509.2, Ellen G. White.

How did Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king recognize Jesus? This shows that Jesus leaves no room for confusion because He is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus makes things clear even for unbelievers. Truth is always crystal clear. God has made it so easy for you and me to accept it.

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished because he was expecting Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to die but they did not. When you faithfully obey God, people will be astonished by the wonders that God will do in your life.

In terms of political position, Nebuchadnezzar was not an ordinary man. He was the most powerful king but he was astonished at what the God of the three Hebrew boys did. When you have faith in God, even the most powerful people on this earth will be astonished when they witness the mighty hand of God in your life.

The princes, governors, captains, and the king's counselors (the highest people in the kingdom) saw how those three men were not only burned but they also had no hint on them that they were in the fiery furnace. Their bodies were not burned. Not a single hair on their heads was burned. Their coats were not touched, and they did not even have the smell of fire on them (Daniel 3:27).

No matter how great the level of evil that someone does to a faithful child of God, it shall have nothing on them. The great impact that Satan's agents are looking to have on you when they do to you something evil, will not be there because the Spirit of God is in you.

Some of these people in high positions who saw that miraculous act were among the people who incited Nebuchadnezzar against the three Hebrew boys. They were ashamed that their wicked plans did not work. God wants the people who are planning evil against you to be ashamed, that is why He wants you to be yielded to His control.

Realizing the power of their God, the king ordered them to come out and acknowledged the greatness of their God. Nebuchadnezzar decrees that no one is to speak against the God of Israel. He goes ahead to promote Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Faith in God leads to promotion.

"By the deliverance of His faithful servants, the Lord declared that He takes His stand with the oppressed, and rebukes all earthly powers that rebel against the authority of Heaven. The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worshiped. They relied on God. In the hour of their trial they remembered the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isaiah 43:2. And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the

representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth." - Prophets and Kings, Page 511.1, Ellen G. White.

John the Baptist

Matthew 14:1-12 (KJ21) - "[1] At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus [2] and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him." [3] For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. [4] For John said unto him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." [5] And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. [6] But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, [7] whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. [8] And she, being beforehand instructed by her mother, said, "Give me here John the Baptist's head on a charger." [9] And the king was sorry; nevertheless for the oath's sake, and those who sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. [10] And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. [11] And his head was brought on a charger and given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother. [12] And his disciples came, and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus."

Herod the Tetrarch, also known as Herod Antipas, ruled over the territories of Galilee and Perea, which were part of the divided kingdom of his father. When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he thought that it was John the Baptist who had risen from the dead. This thought brought a sense of fear in him because of what he had done to John. Thinking that John had risen from the dead shows that he knew that John was a powerful man even though he had killed him.

Why did Herod kill John? Herod killed John because of Herodias, the wife to his brother Philip. Herod had taken his brother's wife. Not caring about the earthly position of Herod, the man who baptized Jesus did not hold back from telling Herod Antipas the truth. The ruler of the territory of Galilee and Perea did not like the truth, but he could not kill John because he feared the multitude who considered John a prophet. Therefore, he kept John in prison.

During Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. As a result, he promised to give her whatever she wanted. He probably thought that Herodias' daughter would ask for material goods for herself. Unfortunately, Herodias advised her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger.

Herod felt sorry but because he made an oath in front of everyone who attended the feast, he commanded that the head of John the Baptist should be given to her. Therefore, he sent John to be beheaded in prison. Thus, John's head was brought on a charger and given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother.

Proclaiming the truth made John to get persecuted by being thrown in prison and by being killed eventually. Despite him being persecuted, the truth he told Herod and Herodias did not leave them. His death haunted Herod because he thought that John had risen from the dead while John was still in the grave. For more than two thousand years later, John the Baptist is still a respectable figure in history because he was the man who baptized Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is also God.

Jesus Christ

Jesus faced intense persecution throughout His ministry, culminating in His crucifixion. He was rejected by religious leaders. The Pharisees and Sadducees constantly opposed Jesus, questioning His authority and seeking to trap Him with His own words (Matthew 16:1; Mark 12:13-17). They accused Him of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God (John 10:33).

The religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus because of His growing influence and the threat they perceived to their power (John 11:47-53). Jesus was betrayed by one of His own disciples, Judas Iscariot, for thirty pieces of silver. Judas led the authorities to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:14-16; 47-50). Jesus had always shown Judas love, but Judas showed him hate. The action that Judas did showed that he despised his master, selling him for only thirty pieces of silver.

Jesus was arrested and taken before the high priest and the Sanhedrin, where He was falsely accused and subjected to an unfair trial (Matthew 26:57-59). He was later taken to Pontius Pilate,

the Roman governor, for sentencing (John 18:28-31). Jesus was mocked, beaten, and spat upon by soldiers. He was crowned with thorns, dressed in a purple robe, and ridiculed as "King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20).

Barabbas was a prisoner mentioned in the New Testament during the trial of Jesus. He was a notorious criminal, described as a robber, murderer, and insurrectionist (Mark 15:7; John 18:40). During the Passover feast, it was customary for the Roman governor to release one prisoner chosen by the people. When Pontius Pilate, the governor, offered the crowd a choice between releasing Jesus or Barabbas, the crowd chose Barabbas to be set free and demanded that Jesus be crucified (Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:18-25; John 18:39-40).

Barabbas represents a stark contrast to Jesus: while he was guilty of crimes against society, Jesus was innocent. The choice to release Barabbas highlights the rejection of Jesus by the people and emphasizes His role as the innocent one who took on the punishment of the guilty. The people chose the man who had troubled them to be released and the one who was constantly healing them, showing them boundless love to be killed.

Jesus was scourged and forced to carry His cross to Golgotha, where He was crucified between two thieves. He endured excruciating physical pain and was mocked by onlookers (Matthew 27:26; Luke 23:33-39).

One thief could not understand why Jesus was crucified with them. He acknowledged his evil and felt that it was justified for him to be on the cross. However, he did not understand why Jesus was on the cross despite being sinless. Jesus did not tell him that he was sinless. He had probably witnessed Jesus' holy life that led him to conclude that Jesus had done no wrong.

On the cross, Jesus experienced separation from God as He bore the sins of the world, crying, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). He ultimately died, fulfilling His mission of redemption (John 19:30).

Throughout His persecution, Jesus demonstrated love and forgiveness, even praying for those who crucified Him: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). This specific prayer shows that even at His death, He was not thinking of Himself, He was thinking of others. Christ's persecution fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and showed Jesus' sacrificial love for humanity.

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Stephen

Stephen, one of the first deacons, was persecuted because of his bold preaching and defense of the gospel. He was seized by the Jewish authorities and falsely accused of blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11-14).

When brought before the Sanhedrin, Stephen gave a powerful speech recounting Israel's history and rebuking their rejection of God's messengers. Enraged, the crowd dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death (Acts 7:54-60). Even when Stephen died, he prayed for his persecutors (Acts 7:60).

Paul

Paul faced frequent persecution throughout his ministry. After his conversion, he preached boldly about Jesus, which led to plots against his life (Acts 9:23-25). He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, and opposed by both Jews and Gentiles. For instance, in Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead by a hostile crowd (Acts 14:19). Paul was also imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:23-24), attacked by a mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30-31), and faced trials before Roman authorities (Acts 24:1-9). Despite this, Paul remained steadfast in his mission to spread the gospel.

Silas

Silas was Paul's companion during his second missionary journey. He faced persecution alongside Paul. In Philippi, they were arrested, beaten, and thrown into prison after casting out a spirit from a slave girl, which led to the loss of her owner's income (Acts 16:19-24). Despite their suffering, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns, leading to a miraculous earthquake that opened the prison doors (Acts 16:25-26). Their faith during persecution led to the conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:27-34).

Barnabas

Barnabas was also persecuted while spreading the gospel. He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey and faced opposition and violence. In Pisidian Antioch, they were opposed by Jewish leaders who stirred up persecution, leading to their expulsion from the region (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, they faced threats of stoning and had to flee to Lystra and Derbe to escape the violence (Acts 14:5-6). Despite these challenges, Barnabas continued to boldly preach and encourage new believers.

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The Apostles of Jesus

After healing a lame man, Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, who commanded them not to speak in Jesus' name. Despite threats, they continued preaching (Acts 4:1-3, 18-21). Later, both apostles were arrested again, beaten, and ordered not to preach about Jesus, but they rejoiced in their suffering (Acts 5:17-18, 40-42).

All the apostles were arrested by the high priest and the Sadducees due to their growing influence and teaching. An angel of the Lord miraculously freed them from prison, and they continued

preaching in the temple. Brought back before the Sanhedrin, they were beaten and commanded to stop preaching in Jesus' name (Acts 5:17-42).

James, the brother of John, was the first recorded apostle to be martyred. King Herod Agrippa I persecuted the church and had James put to death by the sword (Acts 12:1-2). This was a significant loss to the early Christian community and marked the beginning of state-sponsored persecution.

Following James's execution, Herod also had Peter arrested, intending to kill him after Passover. However, an angel rescued Peter from prison (Acts 12:3-11). Later in his ministry, Peter faced further persecution, imprisonment, and eventually martyrdom, as implied by Jesus' prophecy (John 21:18-19).

Although the Bible does not give detailed accounts of the persecution of all the apostles, it is understood that they faced hostility, threats, and martyrdom in their missionary efforts. Jesus had warned them that they would be hated for His name's sake and persecuted (Matthew 10:16-18; John 15:20).

The Bible does not provide detailed accounts of the death of all the apostles of Jesus. However, early Christian tradition gives us accounts of how they died:

Peter

Jesus prophesied Peter's death in John 21:18-19, suggesting that he would be led where he did not want to go, indicating martyrdom. Early church tradition, recorded by writers like Eusebius (Church History, Book III), states that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome during Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians, as he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus.

James, the brother of John

Acts 12:1-2 clearly describes James’s death by the sword. James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in Jerusalem around 44 AD. Thus, making him the first apostle to be martyred.

John, the brother of James

According to Tertullian and other historical accounts, John was allegedly placed in boiling oil as a form of persecution during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. Miraculously, he is said to have survived without harm, after which he was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:9). Tradition holds that he lived to an old age in Ephesus, and it also suggests that he was the only apostle to die a natural death.

Andrew

According to early church tradition, including the writings of Hippolytus, Andrew preached in Asia Minor and Greece before his martyrdom. He is believed to have been crucified on an X-shaped cross (St. Andrew's cross) in Patras, Greece.

Philip

Early church writings by Polycrates of Ephesus and other historical accounts give varying details of Philip's martyrdom. Philip is said to have been martyred in Hierapolis (in modern-day Türkiye), possibly by being crucified or stoned.

Bartholomew (Nathanael)

Early church tradition states that Bartholomew was flayed alive and then beheaded in Armenia for his missionary work.

Thomas (Didymus)

According to tradition, such as the writings of church fathers like Hippolytus, Thomas preached in India and faced martyrdom for his faith. Thomas is believed to have been martyred in India, where he was speared to death while spreading the gospel.

Matthew (Levi)

For Matthew, church traditions provide inconsistent details. Some say he was stabbed, while others claim he died of natural causes. There are varying accounts of Matthew's death. He is believed to have been martyred, possibly in Ethiopia or Persia.

James, the son of Alphaeus

Hippolytus and other early sources give accounts of James' martyrdom, but details are not found in the Bible. James is traditionally believed to have been stoned and clubbed to death in Jerusalem.

Thaddaeus (Jude, son of James)

Tradition from church historians indicates that Thaddaeus faced martyrdom for his faith. He is believed to have been martyred in Persia, possibly by being beaten to death.

Simon the Zealot

Early traditions vary significantly regarding the manner of Simon's death. Simon the Zealot is thought to have been martyred, with different traditions suggesting he died in Persia or by being sawed in half.

Matthias

Church traditions, including the writings of Hippolytus, suggest that Matthias died a martyr. Matthias, who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26), is believed to have been stoned and beheaded in Jerusalem.

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Early Christians in Jerusalem

The early Christians and the early church faced severe persecution, especially during the first few decades after Jesus' ascension. Here are key aspects of the persecution they endured:

Persecution by Religious Leaders

The apostles were the first targets of persecution by the Jewish religious authorities. Peter and John were arrested and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-3, 18-21). All the apostles were arrested again, flogged, and ordered not to preach about Jesus (Acts 5:17-18, 40).

Persecution by Saul (Paul)

Before his conversion, Saul was a fierce persecutor of Christians. He approved Stephen's execution. He went from house to house, arresting men and women who followed Jesus (Acts 8:3). Saul received authority from the high priest to imprison Christians in Damascus, but during his journey, he encountered Jesus and got converted (Acts 9:1-5).

Persecution by King Herod

King Herod Agrippa I launched a persecution against the church, executing James, the brother of John, with the sword and arresting Peter (Acts 12:1-4). Peter was miraculously freed by an angel, but the incident shows that political leaders also targeted the early church (Acts 12:6-11).

Persecution by Jewish and Gentile Crowds

Paul and Barnabas faced intense opposition from both Jews and Gentiles during their missionary journeys. In Pisidian Antioch, they were expelled from the region (Acts 13:50), and in Iconium, they fled due to a plot to stone them (Acts 14:5-6). Paul was stoned in Lystra and left for dead by an angry crowd (Acts 14:19).

Persecution by Roman Authorities

Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned in Philippi for casting out a spirit from a slave girl. They were miraculously freed by an earthquake (Acts 16:22-26). In Ephesus, a riot broke out due to the decline in sales of idols, and Paul was nearly attacked by the mob (Acts 19:23-41).

In Jerusalem, Paul was seized by an angry mob, and Roman soldiers had to intervene to save his life (Acts 21:30-32). He was later imprisoned in Caesarea and eventually taken to Rome, where he faced further persecution (Acts 24:27; Acts 28:16).

General Persecution

The early Christians faced various trials, including loss of property, imprisonment, and public ridicule. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Christians who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance," and others who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings" (Hebrews 11:35-36).

Peter wrote to encourage believers facing persecution, urging them not to be surprised by the "fiery trial" they were undergoing (1 Peter 4:12-13). The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

The early church faced severe persecution, whether in Rome, Smyrna, or across Asia Minor. The church at Smyrna was commended for its steadfast faith amidst persecution, with a promise of the "crown of life" for those who remained faithful (Revelation 2:8-11). Christians in Rome were assured by Paul that despite all hardships, nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35-39).

Believers in Asia Minor were encouraged by Peter to rejoice in their suffering, knowing they were sharing in Christ's sufferings, and to remain faithful even unto death (1 Peter 4:12-19; Revelation 2:10). Through these messages, the early Christians were encouraged to see persecution not as a defeat but as a path to eternal glory and communion with Christ.

Despite the hardships, the early church grew rapidly, and the believers remained steadfast in their faith. Their perseverance under persecution demonstrated their deep commitment to Jesus and their willingness to suffer for the Gospel’s sake.

Timothy

The Bible does not provide explicit details of Timothy's persecution or death. However, it does suggest that Timothy faced hardships and persecution in his ministry, much like other early Christian leaders. Here are some indications of the persecution Timothy faced:

Timothy accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys and was often present during the persecution of Paul. Since Paul faced imprisonment, beatings, and threats (2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Acts 16:22-24), Timothy likely experienced similar challenges as his companion.

Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong and endure suffering, which implies that Timothy faced persecution as a church leader. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3) and also said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

In Hebrews 13:23, it is mentioned that Timothy was released from prison: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty." This verse implies that Timothy was indeed imprisoned for his faith, which indicates that he faced direct persecution.

As a leader in the early church, Timothy had to confront false teachers, endure opposition, and handle difficult situations within the churches he led. Paul wrote to encourage him not to be intimidated and to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12) and reminded him that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7), implying that Timothy needed courage in the face of persecution.

Timothy faced persecution through imprisonment, the dangers of ministry alongside Paul, and the general trials of being an early Christian leader. These hardships reflect the challenges faced by all believers who faithfully served during the growth of the early church.

Polycarp (c. AD 69–155)

Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the Apostle John, was a significant early Christian leader. When arrested, he refused to deny Christ, famously stating, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" He

was sentenced to be burned at the stake. According to historical accounts, when the flames did not consume him, an executioner stabbed him to death. This account is preserved in "The Martyrdom of Polycarp" (Chapter 15-16).

Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 35–108)

Ignatius, an early church leader and bishop of Antioch, was arrested during Emperor Trajan's reign and transported to Rome. During his journey, he wrote several letters encouraging believers to remain steadfast in their faith.

In Rome, he was martyred by being thrown to lions in the Colosseum for refusing to renounce his faith in Christ. His martyrdom is documented in "The Martyrdom of Ignatius" and by later Christian historians such as Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History (Book III, Chapter 36).

Justin Martyr (c. AD 100–165)

Justin was a philosopher who converted to Christianity and became one of its earliest and most notable apologists, defending the faith against Roman persecution and philosophical critics. He was arrested in Rome along with several of his students. When he refused to offer sacrifices to Roman gods, he was sentenced to death and beheaded. This account is found in "The Martyrdom of Justin Martyr," as well as in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (Book IV, Chapter 16).

Perpetua and Felicity (AD 203)

Perpetua, a noblewoman, and Felicity, her servant, were Christian converts martyred in the Roman province of Carthage during Emperor Septimius Severus's persecution. They were part of a group of catechumens who refused to renounce their faith. According to "The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity," they were thrown to wild animals in the arena and, after surviving the attacks, were executed by the sword.

Blandina (AD 177)

Blandina, a Christian slave girl from Lyon (modern-day France), endured severe torture during the persecution under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. She was thrown to wild beasts in the arena, and when she miraculously survived multiple ordeals, she was eventually killed by a gladiator’s sword. Her story is preserved in the letter from the churches of Lyon and Vienne to the churches in Asia Minor, documented in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (Book V, Chapter 1).

The Ten Martyrs of Crete (AD 250)

The Ten Martyrs of Crete were Christians who were martyred during Emperor Decius's persecution for refusing to offer sacrifices to Roman gods. This persecution was part of a broader effort by Decius to enforce loyalty to the empire by requiring public sacrifices. Their martyrdom is preserved in traditional accounts, particularly in the "Acts of the Ten Martyrs of Crete," and their feast day is recognized in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Christians of Lyons (AD 177)

During a wave of persecution in the city of Lyons (modern-day Lyon, France), a group of Christians, including Blandina, faced brutal torture and execution. Many were thrown to wild beasts or burned alive for their faith. Their story is documented in a letter from the churches of Lyon and Vienne to the churches in Asia Minor, preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History (Book V, Chapter 1).

Tertullian (c. AD 155–240)

Tertullian was one of the earliest Christian apologists and theologians. There is no definitive historical account of his death, but tradition holds that he may have suffered imprisonment and possibly martyrdom. His works, which include defenses of Christianity against Roman paganism, provide insight into the challenges faced by early Christians.

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Cyprian of Carthage (AD 258)

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, was executed during Emperor Valerian's persecution for refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods. He was a prominent Christian leader who wrote extensively on church unity and the challenges of persecution. His martyrdom is documented in "The Acts of Cyprian" and by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History (Book VII, Chapter 11).

Sebastian (AD 288, Tradition)

Sebastian was a Roman soldier who converted to Christianity. He was initially shot with arrows and left for dead but survived. After he confronted Emperor Diocletian about his persecution of Christians, he was beaten to death. His story is preserved in Christian tradition and later hagiographies, such as those by St. Ambrose and in the Golden Legend.

Lawrence of Rome (AD 258)

Lawrence, a deacon in Rome, was responsible for distributing alms to the poor. When ordered to surrender the church's wealth, he presented the poor as the church's treasures. He was condemned to be slowly roasted alive on a gridiron. His martyrdom is recorded in "The Acts of Lawrence" and in later works by St. Ambrose.

Catherine of Alexandria (Tradition, AD 305)

According to tradition, Catherine was a Christian scholar who debated with and converted several pagan philosophers. After refusing to marry Emperor Maxentius, she was tortured on the breaking wheel, which miraculously broke, and was later beheaded. This story is largely based on medieval traditions and later hagiographies, such as those in the Golden Legend.

Marcellus the Centurion (AD 298)

Marcellus, a Roman centurion, converted to Christianity and refused to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods or serve in the army any longer. He was executed by beheading. His story is documented in "The Acts of Marcellus."

Maurice and the Theban Legion (AD 286)

Maurice was the commander of the Theban Legion, a group of Christian soldiers in the Roman army. When they refused to participate in pagan rituals and persecuted fellow Christians, they were executed by order of Emperor Maximian. The account of their martyrdom is preserved in "The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Maurice and His Companions."

Felix of Nola (Tradition, AD 250)

Felix was a Christian presbyter in Nola, Italy, who suffered during the Decian persecution. He was arrested and tortured but managed to escape multiple times. His story is documented in later Christian tradition, particularly in the writings of St. Paulinus of Nola.

Lucy of Syracuse (AD 304)

Lucy, a young Christian, refused to marry a pagan man and distributed her wealth to the poor. She was tortured and executed during the Diocletian persecution. Various accounts differ on the details of her death, but her martyrdom is recorded in traditional Christian texts and later hagiographies.

Agnes of Rome (AD 304)

Agnes was a young Roman girl of around 12 to 13 years who refused marriage proposals and committed herself to Christ. She was sentenced to death for her faith and beheaded. Her story is

preserved in early Christian writings and in later hagiographical works, such as those in the Golden Legend.

Maximilian of Tebessa (AD 295)

Maximilian was a young Christian who refused military conscription, stating that his faith did not allow him to serve in the Roman army. He was beheaded for his refusal. His martyrdom is documented in "The Acts of Maximilian."

Perpetua and Felicity (AD 203)

Perpetua and Felicity were Christian converts who were martyred in Carthage during the persecution under Emperor Septimius Severus. They were thrown to wild animals in the arena and later killed by the sword. Their story is recorded in "The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity," one of the earliest and most detailed accounts of early Christian martyrdom.

Eulalia of Mérida (AD 304)

Eulalia, a young Christian girl of 12 years from Mérida, Spain, faced severe persecution during the Diocletian era. She was tortured with hooks and then burned alive for refusing to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods. Her story is preserved in Prudentius' Hymn in Peristephanon, which portrays her innocence and unwavering faith.

Victor of Marseilles (AD 303)

Victor, a Roman soldier in Marseilles, converted to Christianity and was arrested during the Diocletian persecution. After refusing to renounce his faith, he endured severe torture, was crushed by a millstone, and later beheaded. His story is detailed in the Passio Sancti Victoris, an account of his martyrdom.

Symphorosa and Her Seven Sons (AD 138)

Symphorosa, a Christian widow, and her seven sons were martyred during the reign of Emperor Hadrian for refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Each son faced different tortures before being executed. The story is documented in The Acts of the Martyrs.

Alban of Britain (AD 304)

Alban was the first recorded British Christian martyr who sheltered a Christian priest and converted to Christianity during the Diocletian persecution. He was arrested and executed by beheading for refusing to renounce his new faith. His story is recounted in Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People.

Tarcisius (Tradition, AD 257)

Tarcisius, a young Christian, was tasked with carrying the Eucharist to imprisoned Christians. He was attacked by a mob that sought to seize the sacrament, but he refused to surrender it and was beaten to death. St. Ambrose mentions Tarcisius in his writings, highlighting his bravery.

The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (AD 320)

Forty Roman soldiers who were Christians refused to renounce their faith and were sentenced to die on a frozen lake in Sebaste (modern-day Sivas, Türkiye). One soldier eventually renounced his faith, and a guard took his place, leading all 40 to perish. This story is documented by Basil of Caesarea in his sermons and The Acts of the Forty Martyrs.

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Theban Legion (AD 286)

The Theban Legion was composed of Christian soldiers from Egypt who refused to sacrifice to Roman gods or persecute fellow Christians. Emperor Maximian ordered their execution. Their story is recorded in The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Maurice and His Companions.

Saint Maurice was the leader of the Theban Legion, a Christian military unit under Roman Emperor Maximian. The legion, comprised of about 6,600 soldiers, was called to Gaul (modern-day France) to suppress a rebellion. Upon their arrival, the emperor demanded that they offer sacrifices to pagan gods and participate in persecuting fellow Christians as a demonstration of loyalty to Rome.

Maurice and his legion refused to renounce their Christian faith or participate in the persecution of other Christians. They were willing to obey all lawful commands of the emperor, but not those that contradicted their faith and conscience.

Their refusal enraged Emperor Maximian, who ordered their punishment. The legion was subjected to a "decimation," a brutal practice where every tenth soldier was killed. Even after this, they remained resolute. Further orders to sacrifice to the Roman gods were again met with refusal, and the entire legion was ultimately executed for their unwavering faith.

Saint Maurice and the Theban Legion are venerated as martyrs in both the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Their story symbolizes courage, faithfulness, and the willingness to sacrifice worldly life for eternal values. The Abbey of Saint Maurice in Switzerland, one of the oldest continually operating monasteries in the world, is dedicated to their memory.

Fructuosus of Tarragona (AD 259)

Fructuosus, the bishop of Tarragona, Spain, was arrested and burned alive during Emperor Valerian's persecution of Christians. His martyrdom is detailed in The Acts of Fructuosus, which describes his steadfastness in faith.

Phileas of Thmuis (AD 306)

Phileas, the bishop of Thmuis in Egypt, was executed during the Diocletian persecution. He was known for defending the faith. Eusebius mentions Phileas in his Ecclesiastical History (Book VIII), where he describes the bishop's refusal to yield to Roman demands.

Maximus of Naples (AD 305)

Maximus, a deacon in Naples, was executed by being thrown into the sea during the Diocletian persecution. He chose to die rather than renounce his Christian faith. His martyrdom is recounted in traditional records of early Christian persecutions.

Vincent of Saragossa (AD 304)

Vincent, a deacon in Saragossa, Spain, was arrested and subjected to brutal torture, including being burned and stretched on the rack, but he refused to denounce his faith. His story is preserved in Prudentius' Hymn and The Acts of Vincent, which portray him as an exemplar of perseverance.

Quiricus and Julietta (AD 304)

Julietta, a Christian woman, and her young son Quiricus were martyred during the Diocletian persecution. According to tradition, Quiricus was killed by being thrown down stairs, while Julietta was tortured and beheaded. Their story is preserved in The Acts of Quiricus and Julietta.

Waldensians (12th Century Onwards)

"Amid the gloom that settled upon the earth during the long period of papal supremacy, the light of truth could not be wholly extinguished. In every age there were witnesses for God,—men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath. How much the world owes to these men,

posterity will never know. They were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented, or mutilated. Yet they stood firm, and from age to age maintained their faith in its purity, as a sacred heritage for the generations to come.” - The Great Controversy, Page 61.1, Ellen G. White.

The Waldensians, founded by Peter Waldo in the late 12th century, sought to live according to the Bible and reject the wealth and power of the church. They were also known as the Poor of Lyon (or "Pauperes Lugdunenses" in Latin). They were declared heretics by the Roman Catholic Church, leading to brutal massacres, forced conversions, and persecution, particularly during the 1487 Papal Bull of Innocent VIII.

Jan Hus (1369–1415)

“The gospel had been planted in Bohemia as early as the ninth century. The Bible was translated, and public worship was conducted in the language of the people. But as the power of the pope increased, so the Word of God was obscured. Gregory VII., who had taken it upon him “to pull down the pride of kings,” was no less intent upon enslaving the people, and accordingly a bull was issued forbidding public worship to be conducted in the Bohemian tongue. The pope declared that “God was pleased that his worship should be celebrated in an unknown tongue, and that a neglect of this rule had given rise to many evils and heresies.” Thus Rome decreed that the light of God's Word should be extinguished, and the people should be shut up in darkness. But Heaven had provided other agencies for the preservation of the church. Many of the Waldenses and Albigenses, driven by persecution from their homes in France and Italy, came to Bohemia. Though they dared not teach openly, they labored zealously in secret. Thus the true faith was preserved from century to century.” - The Great Controversy, Page 97.1, Ellen G. White.

“John Huss was of humble birth, and was early left an orphan by the death of his father. His pious mother, regarding education and the fear of God as the most valuable of possessions, sought to secure this heritage for her son. Huss studied at the provincial school, and then repaired to the university at Prague, receiving admission as a charity scholar. He was accompanied on the journey to Prague by his mother; widowed and poor, she had no gift of worldly wealth to bestow upon her son, but as they drew near to the great city, she kneeled down beside the fatherless youth, and

invoked for him the blessing of their Father in Heaven. Little did that mother realize how her prayer was to be answered." - The Great Controversy, Page 98.1, Ellen G. White.

Jan Hus was a Czech theologian who challenged the Catholic Church's corruption and emphasized the authority of the Bible. He was condemned as a heretic by the Council of Constance and burned at the stake in 1415. His life and execution are detailed in The Letters of John Hus, Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Great Controversy by Ellen G. White.

John Wycliffe (1331–1384)

"Before the Reformation there were at times but very few copies of the Bible in existence; but God had not suffered his Word to be wholly destroyed. Its truths were not to be forever hidden. He could as easily unchain the words of life as he could open prison doors and unbolt iron gates to set his servants free. In the different countries of Europe, men were moved by the Spirit of God to search for the truth as for hid treasures. Providentially guided to the Holy Scriptures, they studied the sacred pages with intense interest. They were willing to accept the light, at any cost to themselves. Though they did not see all things clearly, they were enabled to perceive many long-buried truths. As Heaven-sent messengers they went forth, rending asunder the chains of error and superstition, and calling upon those who had been so long enslaved to arise and assert their liberty." - The Great Controversy, Page 79.1, Ellen G. White.

"In the fourteenth century arose in England the "morning-star of the Reformation." John Wycliffe was the herald of reform, not for England alone, but for all Christendom. The great protest against Rome which it was permitted him to utter, was never to be silenced. That protest opened the struggle which was to result in the emancipation of individuals, of churches, and of nations." - The Great Controversy, Page 79.3, Ellen G. White.

John Wycliffe, an English theologian and Bible translator, criticized the papacy and church practices, advocating for vernacular translations of the Bible. Although he died of natural causes, the Council of Constance condemned his teachings in 1415, and in 1428, his remains were exhumed and burned. This event is documented in Foxe's Book of Martyrs by John Foxe and the Great Controversy by Ellen G. White.

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William Sawtrey (died 1401)

William Sawtrey, an English priest and follower of John Wycliffe, was burned at the stake for heresy in England. He rejected doctrines like transubstantiation and the veneration of saints. His trial and execution are described in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

Lollards (14th–16th Centuries)

The Lollards, followers of John Wycliffe, were persecuted for their calls to reform the church and reject its hierarchy. Many were imprisoned, tortured, or executed by burning. Their persecution is documented in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498)

Girolamo Savonarola, an Italian Dominican friar, preached against the corruption of the church and ruling class in Florence. He was excommunicated, arrested, and ultimately hanged and burned for heresy. His life and execution are documented in The Life and Times of Savonarola by Pasquale Villari.

Peter of Bruys (12th Century)

Peter of Bruys was a French preacher who opposed various Catholic Church practices, including infant baptism and the veneration of the cross. He was arrested and burned at the stake for heresy. His activities are described in Medieval Heresies: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam by Malcolm Lambert.

John Oldcastle (1370–1417)

John Oldcastle, a Lollard leader and English nobleman, supported Wycliffe's teachings and led a rebellion after escaping prison. He was eventually captured and executed by hanging and burning. His story is recorded in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

Bohemian Brethren (15th Century)

The Bohemian Brethren, influenced by the teachings of Jan Hus, were persecuted by both Catholic and Protestant authorities. They were often forced into exile or imprisoned. Their history is covered in The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice edited by Zdeněk V. David.

The Beguines (12th–14th Centuries)

The Beguines were lay religious women who lived in poverty and served the poor. They faced hostility from the church for their independence, with some groups forcibly dissolved. Their persecution is documented in The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor by Sean L. Field.

The Hussites (15th Century)

The Hussites, followers of Jan Hus, were subjected to five papal crusades aimed at eradicating their movement. Despite defending themselves militarily, they continued to face persecution. Their story is detailed in The Hussite Revolution by Howard Kaminsky.

The Apostolic Brethren (13th Century)

Founded by Gerard Segarelli and later led by Fra Dolcino, the Apostolic Brethren sought a return to the lifestyle of the apostles. They were condemned by the church, and many were killed. Their story is included in The Apostolic Brethren by Raoul Manselli.

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Begards and Beghards (13th–14th centuries)

The Begards (men) and Beghards (men and women) were lay religious communities like the Beguines. They led lives of poverty and piety without taking formal religious vows. The Catholic Church condemned them for heretical tendencies, and many were persecuted, imprisoned, and burned at the stake. They were officially condemned at the Council of Vienne (1311–1312) (McDonnell, 1969).

Menocchio (1532–1599)

Domenico Scandella, also known as Menocchio, was an Italian miller who developed unorthodox religious beliefs influenced by the Reformation. He rejected many established Catholic doctrines and believed in a more personal, spiritual Christianity. The Roman Inquisition condemned Menocchio for heresy, and he was burned at the stake in 1599 (Ginzburg, 1980).

Thomas Becket (1119–1170)

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, had a long-standing conflict with King Henry II over the rights and privileges of the Church. On December 29, 1170, four of Henry's knights murdered Becket inside Canterbury Cathedral. His death was seen as martyrdom, and he was canonized in 1173 (Knowles, 1971).

Arnoldists (12th century)

The Arnoldists were followers of Arnold of Brescia, who condemned the wealth and secular power of the Church. Arnold was executed in 1155, and his followers were subsequently persecuted, with many of them being excommunicated and killed (Lambert, 2002).

John Ball (1338–1381)

John Ball, a Lollard priest, played a prominent role in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England, advocating for social equality and religious reform. He was captured after the revolt was suppressed, and he was executed by being hanged, drawn, and quartered (Hilton, 2003).

Taborites (15th century)

The Taborites were a radical faction of the Hussite movement in Bohemia. They sought to create a new Christian society based on communal living. Between 1420 and 1434, they were the target of several crusades organized by the Catholic Church, leading to numerous massacres (Kaminsky, 2004).

Patarenes (11th–13th centuries)

The Patarenes were a reform movement based in Lombardy, opposed to the moral corruption and wealth of the clergy. They faced severe persecution, including excommunication and execution, as the Church sought to suppress their efforts to establish a purer form of Christianity (Hamilton, 2003).

John Badby (died 1410)

John Badby, an English layman and Lollard, rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. He was tried for heresy and burned at the stake in 1410, making him one of the first laypersons in England to be executed for heresy (Aston, 1993).

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The Henricians (12th century)

The Henricians were followers of Henry of Lausanne, who criticized the excesses of the Catholic Church. They were declared heretics, and many were excommunicated or executed as part of the Church's efforts to stamp out heresy (Lambert, 2002).

Joaquinites (13th century)

The Joaquinites were followers of Joachim of Fiore, who developed radical apocalyptic views. They predicted the coming age of the Spirit and were persecuted by the Church for their millenarian beliefs, with some of them being imprisoned or executed (Reeves, 1969).

Marguerite Porete (1250–1310)

Marguerite Porete was a Christian mystic. She was associated with the Beguine movement, a lay Christian group, and her writings focused on spiritual mysticism and union with God. She wrote The Mirror of Simple Souls, which contained mystical and spiritual ideas that were seen as heretical. She was arrested by the Inquisition, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake in Paris in 1310 (Field, 2012).

William Tyndale (1494–1536)

William Tyndale was an English scholar and translator of the Bible into English. He was condemned for heresy by the Catholic Church for translating the Scriptures and was executed by strangling and burning in 1536 (Daniell, 1994).

Giovanni di Montenero (15th century)

Giovanni di Montenero, a follower of Girolamo Savonarola, supported the reform ideas of the radical preacher. He was eventually arrested by the Church authorities and executed for his association with Savonarola's movement (Ridolfi, 1959).

The End Times Tribulation

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The End Times Tribulation is a future period of intense persecution and suffering for believers, characterized by the rise and reign of the Antichrist. It is described vividly in the book of Revelation, and the following passages, Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 13:7-10. These passages provide crucial insight into the challenges that believers will face during this time.

Persecution by the Dragon

Revelation 12:17 (KJ21) - "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

In this verse, the "dragon" represents Satan, who is enraged by his inability to destroy the "woman." The woman represents the church. After failing to destroy her, the dragon turns his attention to "the remnant of her seed," symbolizing faithful believers in Jesus Christ during the end times.

These believers are characterized by two traits: they "keep the commandments of God" and "have the testimony of Jesus Christ." This means that they are faithful followers of Christ who remain obedient to God, even under severe pressure and persecution. The dragon, filled with rage, declares war against them, showing his determination to eradicate their faith and bring about their suffering.

The phrase "make war" implies a sustained and aggressive persecution, orchestrated by Satan against those who remain committed to God. This sets the stage for the intense period of tribulation that will befall believers, highlighting the spiritual warfare and suffering that will unfold.

The Reign of the Beast

Revelation 13:7 (KJ21) - "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations."

In this verse, the "beast" refers to the Antichrist, a figure empowered by Satan to rule over the earth during the end times. The phrase "it was given unto him" means that this power was permitted by God, which aligns with the idea that God allows these events as part of His ultimate plan for judgment and redemption.

The beast "makes war with the saints"—the followers of Jesus Christ. This "war" includes systematic persecution, imprisonment, torture, and even death for those who refuse to worship the beast or accept his authority. The Antichrist's power over "all kindreds, tongues, and nations" means a global dominion, suggesting that no believer is exempt from the reach of this persecution. The statement that he will "overcome them" signifies that many believers will be killed or greatly oppressed during this time, yet their spiritual victory remains in their faithfulness to Christ.

Revelation 13:8 (KJ21) - "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. "

This verse contrasts the true believers with those who worship the beast. Only those whose names are written in the "book of life" will resist worshiping the Antichrist. This book signifies those who belong to Jesus Christ and have eternal life through Him.

Revelation 13:9-10 (KJ21) - "[9] If any man have an ear, let him hear. [10] He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

The phrase "If any man have an ear, let him hear" is a call for discernment and attentiveness. The following verse contains a solemn statement: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." This could be interpreted as a declaration of divine justice. Those who persecute and kill the saints will ultimately face judgment themselves. It also serves as a reminder that vengeance belongs to God, not to believers.

The closing part, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints," highlights the virtue of endurance. In the face of relentless persecution, believers are called to persevere and remain faithful, trusting in God’s justice and promise of eternal life. This endurance reflects the steadfast commitment of the saints to Christ, even when faced with suffering and death.

The Nature of the Persecution During the Tribulation

The persecution described in Revelation 12 and 13 depicts a systematic, all-encompassing effort to destroy the followers of Christ. Satan, through the agency of the Antichrist, seeks to wipe out

the faithful. The persecution will be both political and religious in nature, as the Antichrist demands worship and enforces his authority through violence and control.

Believers will face not only spiritual warfare but also physical persecution, including imprisonment and martyrdom. The reference to the "war" against the saints emphasizes that this period will be characterized by brutal opposition to anyone who refuses to align themselves with the Antichrist's agenda.

The faithful will be marginalized and targeted because they refuse to worship the beast or receive his mark (later detailed in Revelation 13:16-17), which will likely be a requirement for economic survival. This means that Christians will not only be persecuted physically but will also face severe economic and social hardships as a result of their faith.

Endurance and Hope for Believers

Despite the immense persecution, believers are encouraged to hold fast to their faith. The repeated call to patience, endurance, and the promise of the "crown of life" (as mentioned in Revelation 2:10) serve as a source of hope for those who will endure these trials.

The reminder that "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" emphasizes that God will ultimately judge the persecutors. Believers are called to trust in God's justice, knowing that even though they may suffer in this life, they are promised victory and vindication in the end.

The End Times Tribulation, as described in Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 13:7-10, will be a period of intense persecution against believers, initiated by Satan and executed through the Antichrist. The dragon's war against the "remnant of her seed" represents Satan's attack on all faithful followers of Christ. The Antichrist, empowered by Satan, will make war against the saints, leading to widespread persecution, imprisonment, and death for those who refuse to worship him.

Believers are called to endure and remain faithful despite these challenges, knowing that God's justice will prevail and that they are ultimately victorious in Christ. The message emphasizes endurance, hope, and faithfulness in the face of overwhelming trials, encouraging believers to trust in God's ultimate plan for redemption and justice.

“Those who live during the last days of this earth's history will know what it means to be persecuted for the truth's sake. In the courts injustice will prevail. The judges will refuse to listen to the reasons of those who are loyal to the commandments of God because they know the arguments in favor of the fourth commandment are unanswerable. They will say, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die.” God's law is nothing to them. “Our law” with them is supreme. Those who respect this human law will be favored, but those who will not bow to the idol sabbath have no favors shown them.” — The Signs of the Times, May 26, 1898, Ellen G. White.

“The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey His law.” - Last Day Events, Page 146.2, Ellen G. White.

“Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government.” — The Great Controversy, Page 592 (1911), Ellen G. White.

“All who in that evil day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His Word, for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil.” — The Acts of the Apostles, Page 431- 432 (1911), Ellen G. White.

Hebrews 10:32-39 (AMP) - “[32] But remember the earlier days when, after you had been spiritually enlightened, you endured a great conflict of suffering; [33] sometimes being made a spectacle, publicly exposed to insults and distress, and at other times being partners with those who were so treated. [34] For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted with joy the confiscation of your belongings, knowing that you have a lasting possession and treasure in heaven that is greater and more enduring. [35] Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it has a great reward. [36] For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive and enjoy to the full what is promised. [37] For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay. [38] But My righteous one [the one justified by faith] will live by faith; and if he draws back [cowering in fear], My soul has no delight in him. [39] But our way is not that of those who shrink back to destruction, but we are of those who believe, relying on God through faith in Jesus Christ, and by this faith preserve the soul.”

In Hebrews 10:32-39, the author is addressing early Christian believers who had undergone persecution and hardships for their faith. He tells them to remember the earlier days when they endured the great conflict of suffering after they had been spiritually enlightened. When you start acquiring Godly knowledge and applying it, Satan will bring all forms of opposition because you are posing a threat to His kingdom. He will bring things to discourage you, and make you fall off the course.

Sometimes, those who are persecuted face ridicule, people making a spectacle of them. A couple of times they faced insults and distress. However, they ashamed the Devil and his agents by continuing to act in righteousness. They showed sympathy and deep concern for the prisoners. They became united with those who were mistreated.

They accepted the unjust seizure of their belongings and confiscation of their property, being conscious that they have a better and everlasting possession in heaven. In moments of persecution, do not look at the short-term painful effects of that persecution. Instead, keep your eyes on the eternal heavenly prize.

The writer of Hebrews is encouraging them not to stop being fearless because their courage in Christ has a great reward. It was Christ who gave them that courage and faith to endure persecution and He will reward them for it. What a mighty God we serve! He goes on to tell them that they have need of patient endurance, to bear up under difficult circumstances without compromising.

Difficult circumstances should never cause us to compromise. When they press hard, they depend on the outstretched arm of God Almighty to continue pressing harder. Nothing can defeat God and when God is in you, nothing should defeat you.

“We need not be surprised at anything that may take place now. We need not marvel at any developments of horror. Those who trample under their unholy feet the law of God have the same spirit as had the men who insulted and betrayed Jesus. Without any compunctions of conscience they will do the deeds of their father the devil.” — Selected Messages 3:416 (1897), Ellen G. White.

“Let those who desire to be refreshed in mind and instructed in the truth study the history of the early church during and immediately following the Day of Pentecost. Study carefully in the book

of Acts the experiences of Paul and the other apostles, for God's people in our day must pass through similar experiences." — Last Day Events, Page 148.1, Ellen G. White.

Matthew 5:10-12 (KJ21) - "[10] Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. [11] Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. [12] Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."

A blessed promise is offered to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This does not mean those who are persecuted are the only ones who will go to heaven. All who believe in Jesus and accept Him as their personal savior, yielding themselves to His control, will inherit eternal life. However, there are special rewards for those who have endured a rougher road than those who have enjoyed smooth roads. This is because they were able to victoriously overcome the challenges of that journey.

Having read this chapter on persecution, you may think that a Christian's life is subject to hell and doom while on this earth. A Christian's life is subject to blessings alone. "Blessed are they who are persecuted (Matthew 5:10).

We should rejoice when persecuted because persecution is a blessing in disguise. Sometimes blessings will come to you directly whereby it will be easy for you to discern that those are blessings coming to you. Other times, blessings will come to you in disguise, and it may come in the form of persecution.

Be willing to welcome opposition for righteousness' sake. I have faced so much opposition in God's service, particularly in my writings but the blessings I have gained are more than the opposition that I have faced. Like Paul in Acts 20:24, we should not be threatened by persecution. Instead, we should boldly say, "None of these things move me."

GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come before You, the source of all strength and courage, to ask for Your sustaining grace in

times of trial. Just as You upheld those who endured persecution for Your name, strengthen our hearts to remain steadfast in faith.

Grant us courage like Daniel in the lion’s den, boldness like Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, and resilience like Paul through his imprisonments. Encourage us with the promise of Your presence, for You have said You will never leave nor forsake us.

When fear arises, remind us of Your Word, which declares, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Help us to trust that You will bring us through every storm, for Your power is made perfect in our weakness.

Lord, may we always walk in love, even toward those who oppose us, reflecting the light of Christ. Fill us with hope and joy as we hold fast to the assurance of eternal life with You. In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Activity

- Write a letter or create a small card of encouragement for someone in your life facing challenges, whether they are persecuted for their faith or struggling in another way. Include Bible verses that emphasize God's faithfulness, such as Romans 8:35-39 or Psalm 46:1-3.
- Take a step toward reconciliation with someone who has wronged you. Pray for their well-being and, if possible, extend an act of kindness toward them. This mirrors the forgiveness and grace shown by many persecuted believers, such as Stephen, who prayed for those who stoned him (Acts 7:59-60).

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2003

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CHAPTER 86

THE ULTIMATE PROMISE OF FAITH

The heroes of faith have not yet received the promise,

For eternal life, God does not want us to miss,

He wants us all to enjoy the joy and the bliss,

Of that long-awaited eternal promise.

God is willing that none of us should perish,

We should repent, His commandments we should cherish,

God will wipe away all dirt, leaving behind no blemish,

As some men count slowness, God is not slow concerning His promise.

If you live by faith, you shall have a good report,

If you live by faith, you will drop sin like it's hot,

If you live by faith, you shall love God a lot,

Living by faith is getting out of the zone of comfort.

Let us live looking forward to the promise that's ultimate,

Let Jesus in your heart, and with love, your heart will melt,

Faith opens all doors, even the most protected navy gate,

With Jesus as the sailor, we should trust Him to safely navigate.

Hebrews 11:39-40 (KJV) – "[39] And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: [40] God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

The ultimate reward for having faith in God is attaining eternal life and going to heaven.

John 3:16 (KJV) – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God promises various blessings if you believe in Him and obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 28:1-13). Some of the blessings He has already given us and some He will provide us if we obey His commandments. For example, you might have been praying for God to bless you financially, and then He gives you a business idea and a plan for executing it. If you obey and implement that idea, you will get uplifted economically, but if you don't implement it, you may continue being in the financial state that you are currently in. God may not always give you a business idea, but He may show you how to use your talent so that you can have financial freedom. However, there are many highly talented individuals who have chosen to bury their talents in the ground and have resolved to beg or get into illegal avenues of acquiring money.

You may be praying to God to improve your marital or courting relations. Then He directs you to read a Bible text or a devotional article. He may direct you to read a Christian book like Adventist Home or Letters to Young Lovers, both by Ellen G. White, which can be accessed without paying a penny from http://www.egwwritings.org or the Ellen G. White mobile application. If you obey God's voice and read them and apply the recommended tips, your relationship will be blessed; if you don't, it may remain the way it is or worsen since you are doing nothing to improve it.

You might be praying for God to heal you or improve your critical health condition; then He directs you to exercise, get exposed to more air and sunlight and change your diet. He may lead you to read a Christian book like Ministry of Healing, Counsels on Health, or Counsels on Diet and Foods by Ellen G. White. If you apply the content that they possess to the last detail, your health will improve. Some diseases which may seem chronic will leave your body completely once you obey everything that God has told you because God wants you to have perfect health.

Some blessings given by God are by grace and are given to everyone. Some are conditional, and for the conditional ones, you must fulfill that condition before getting those blessings. Some

blessings that God will provide us are meant to be enjoyed while we are still alive in this world, while some are meant to be enjoyed in eternity after He has taken us to our glorious home in heaven.

The blessing we receive while on this earth is like an appetizer meant to complement the main meal and whet the appetite before the main course. The blessings we get are like the goals we score in a friendly football, basketball, hockey, rugby, American football, golf, volleyball, or any other game. The goals we achieve in friendly matches or during games meant for practice do not count. It is the ones that we score during a tournament that matters. It is like doing an exam to practice before the main exam.

Therefore, we should not be overindulged in the blessings we receive while on this earth that we miss out on eternal life. A certain pastor once gave this story while preaching at the end of a Camp meeting in Nairobi South Seventh Day Adventist Church one Saturday. He said there was a time when they were invited to a function. Before the main meal was brought, an appetizer was brought. Some took the appetizer like the main meal and ate too much of it that when the main meal was brought, they were not able to absorb it, since their stomachs were full. We should not get so immersed in this world that we miss out on the chance to go to heaven.

Most of the heroes of faith in the Bible died without receiving the promise of eternal life. Some died natural deaths while some were persecuted, like Peter and other disciples of Jesus Christ, except John, who died a natural death, and Judas, who committed suicide. God promised in John 3:16 that whosoever shall believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life. The question is, why have they died and they believed in God? Why have they not yet received the promise of eternal life?

The answer lies in Hebrews 11:39-40.

Hebrews 11:39-40 (KJV) – "[39] And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: [40] God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

They have not yet received the ultimate promise because God loves us all and is willing that none of us should perish (2 Peter 3:9). To say this in simpler terms, one reason God has not yet come is that He wants more people to get saved. God hates sin, and it grieves Him, but He has to bear with

it so that more people can get saved. God is not looking forward to satisfying Himself. If He were looking forward to pleasing Himself, he would have ended this world immediately after Adam and Eve had sinned.

God is looking after the satisfaction of everyone. He is thinking about the hard-hearted criminal who has received a life sentence in prison. He is thinking about the unborn babies. He is concerned about everyone. Therefore, God is giving us a chance to repent. That is why we think He has delayed His promise of returning a second time. God wants people in this modern age to get saved, like He wanted people in times past to acquire the gift of salvation.

Therefore, the heroes of faith would not receive the ultimate promise before we receive it. We must learn from the heroes of faith and follow their righteous example. We should only replicate the faithful actions they did and shun the evil practices while tightly holding on to God. Like Enoch, we should walk with God all the days of our lives. Unlike Solomon, we should not worship idols and be unequally yoked to unbelievers. Like Solomon, we should ask God for wisdom.

We should trust God to help us overcome the most challenging battles like David. Like Moses, we should trust God to show us the way where there seems to be no way. Like King Josiah, we should reform immediately once we know something is evil. Like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we should trust in God even in the face of impossibility. The list is long and endless because many great men and women of faith have stories not written in the Bible. Some lived after the Bible was written and compiled.

Isaiah 66:23 (KJV) – "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord."

It will be a glorious event to worship God from Sabbath to Sabbath. Nothing can compare to the joy of daily being in His presence.

"**In Heaven, All Is Purity and Peace**—Through Christ alone can you make sure of heaven, where all is purity, holiness, peace, and blessedness, where there are glories that mortal lips cannot describe. The nearest we can come to a description of the reward that awaits the overcomer is to say that it is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It will be an eternity of bliss, a blessed eternity, unfolding new glories throughout the ceaseless ages." – Heaven, Page 138.1, Ellen G. White.

What is our role as Christians while still in this world?

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) – "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

"When we speak of faith, there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His Word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny. The Bible says that "the devils also believe, and tremble;" but this is not faith. Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. And the heart that in its unrenewed state is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, now delights in its holy precepts, exclaiming with the psalmist, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97. And the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1." - Steps to Christ, Page 63-64, Ellen G. White.

Our work is to live by faith and show faith through obedience to God. If we do that, we will get the ultimate promise of eternal life.

GOD LOVES YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for giving me a chance to live a righteous life. Thank You for not ending this world before I was born. Please help me to obey all Your commandments and help me not to miss eternal life. In Jesus name, Amen.

Activity

1. List the heroes of faith you know of in the Bible and the good actions they did.
2. Find out how you can apply their lessons in this modern world.
3. How are you preparing for the second coming of Jesus?

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THE END

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

GOD BLESS YOU!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Alex is a servant of God in his purpose. He is a Seventh Day Adventist evangelist through his ministry Get Truth Get Life: www.gettruthgetlife.com. He is also a Technology Professional and Mechatronical Engineer. He builds life-changing technological solutions in his technology firm Real Biz Digital.

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